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Sajhedari Bikaas Project

Partnership for Local Development

Quarterly Conflict Assessment

(May 2015)

The Social Implications of Migration in Nepal





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*Assessment conducted by Saferworld for the Sajhedari Bikaas Project
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The Social Implications of Migration in Nepal

Introduction

This report summarises key findings from the fifth quarterly conflict assessment, carried out by Saferworld within the framework of the Sajhedari Bikaas project.

The project, which is administered by Pact and funded by USAID, aims to improve the ability of targeted communities in six districts in the Far West and Mid-West regions of Nepal to direct local development. It does this by establishing and improving an enabling environment for community development; improving communities' ability to access resources for development; improving communities' ability to effectively implement inclusive development projects; and increasing the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively.

Existing and emerging conflicts are, or have the potential to become, obstacles to community development, inclusive and accountable decision-making and improved governance. A series of conflict assessments are being carried out by Saferworld during the Sajhedari Bikaas project to ensure that the project is based on sound analysis of the context and an understanding of the conflict environment, and to enable it to identify and respond to changes in the context.

Migration within Nepal and to other countries, especially India and the Gulf states, is a major phenomenon in Nepal. The Department of Foreign Employment estimates that over 1,000 Nepalis leave the country every day to migrate for work to India, and this number is rising.¹ The majority of those migrating are young working-age men,² although women are also migrating.

This assessment explored perceptions at the community and district level on the social impacts of migration. The assessment findings have been structured to reflect the issues faced by migrants in the country of emigration: financial and livelihood issues; consequences of migration faced by the family; the effects of migration on women associated with migrants, as well as female migrants; community implications of migration; and the relationship between the government and migration. Out of six *Sajhedari Bikaas* districts, this assessment focused on three: Dang in the Mid-West region and Kailali and Kanchanpur in the Far West region. These districts were selected because they had the highest number of absentees (both in total numbers and proportional in relation to their overall population).³

¹ DoFE (2011), Data on Foreign Labour Migration, www.dofe.gov.np

² According to a study by the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management and IoM (2010), approx. one third of working age men have migrated abroad.

³ Mega Publication and Research Centre (2013), Village Development Committee and Demographic Profile of Nepal: A Socio-Economic Development Database of Nepal.

The research methodology included two stages. During the first stage information was collected through a desk research and review of secondary data; the second stage included participatory consultations and field research. The latter was conducted in two phases in the same districts. The first phase was exploratory in its design and informed the methodology for the second phase of data collection. A total of 9 group discussions (GDs) were held in Phase 1: 3 with local experts who were best placed to respond to questions around social and economic costs of migration within their districts; 3 GDs with women and men migrants from the research districts; and 3 GDs with women and men family members of migrants. In Phase 2, a total of 57 interviews including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Group Interviews (GIs) were conducted separately with male and female migrants, their female and male family members, male and female community members, local organisations working on migration, government service providers, journalists and local manpower agents.

The data collection was based on qualitative techniques using in-depth interviews with key informants and participatory tools within GDs. In total there were 59 female respondents and 91 male respondents. Field research for this assessment took place between the 1st and the 21st of September 2014; a period just before the Dashain and Tihar holidays, when the likelihood of migrants returning home was higher. As it was harvest season, it was also expected that migrants from India would be more likely to join their families in Nepal to support the labour work.

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Acronyms

DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
GD	Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GI	Group Interview
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee

Executive summary of findings

This research looks at the social impacts of migration on the source communities in Nepal. It focuses in particular on its implications on interpersonal relationships, community relationships and relations with the state, in the districts of Dang in the Mid-West Region and Kailali and Kanchanpur in the Far-West Region.

The biggest reason for migration was economic. With high levels of vulnerable employment and underemployment, migrants go abroad looking for better employment. Youth, who constitute a large percentage of the population, are more likely to seek the employment opportunities they feel are not available in their village or Nepal. These economic pressures are linked to social pressures, which are particularly strong on young men who are traditionally expected to provide for their families. The desire for higher standards of living is another reason for seeking employment abroad. Overall, more young men were reported to have gone abroad than women. Research respondents felt that women were restricted from going abroad by cultural expectations, whereby they have to take care of the home, and by society's perceptions of women who go abroad. The research indicated that a migrant's socio-economic status played a part in determining which destination country they went to: lower class migrants tended to go to India, often for seasonal work; middle class migrants tended to go to Gulf countries; and higher class migrants tended to go to Europe.

Migrants can face a number of problems during their migration and in their destination countries. One of the biggest concerns highlighted were with manpower companies and agents. It was reported that these companies would break their promises and change contracts when migrants arrived in their destination countries, often changing jobs without the migrants' knowledge. Confiscation of passports and debt repayments were other ways these employers forced migrants to accept poor working and living conditions. Women had additional threats of sexual abuse and rape. Migrants often faced pressure to keep quiet about their conditions, for fear of judgement about the type of employment they were engaged in or the social stigma associated with certain jobs. This lack of communication created tension between the migrants and their families, who were unaware of what was happening. Additional financial stress for migrants was caused by debt burdens or from being robbed when crossing the border to/from India. Migrants also experienced health problems due to poor living and working conditions. Male migrants are also susceptible to stress and addiction as they are culturally inhibited from expressing emotions or vulnerabilities. Concerns that returning migrants might have contracted Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Auto Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV/AIDS) were raised by many research participants. The issue of industrial accidents and deaths abroad has also been reported in the media.

Financial problems associated with migration generally fall into one of two categories: issues related to a lack of, or limited, funding for families of migrants or family disputes associated with remittances. Non-seasonal migration could place an additional burden on agriculturally-dependent families because of the loss of labour. There were, however, some cases where

community support mitigated this. The issue of how remittances were spent was a widely discussed topic. ‘Wise spending’ included spending money on houses, land or education, and investing in business ventures. ‘Unwise spending’ included families who were considered to ‘show off’ their wealth or used the money to live luxurious lifestyles, such as buying modern gadgets or jewellery, dining in restaurants, gambling and consuming excess alcohol. However, researchers noted a system of loans in the community where those who had managed their remittances well, supported others to cover the costs of migration or emergencies. This was an example of migration having a positive impact on the community.

Migration was also found to contribute to empowerment, either because the new experiences broadened the migrant’s perspective and helped them become more confident, or because migrants gained new skills which they could use upon their return to engage in more profitable economic activities. However, increased confidence and freedom could sometimes cause problems for female migrants when, upon their return, they were expected to reintegrate into a patriarchal society. In addition, migrants with a poor level of education often had low skilled jobs while abroad but did not have the same opportunities when they returned, sometimes leading to a ‘migration cycle trap.’

In the research, migration was seen to have significant consequences for the family. Family tensions, especially between spouses, increased the stress on both spouses and could lead to family disintegration. In cases where there was tension in the relationship with in-laws, a wife might move out of the house until her husband returned. Research participants identified that infidelity was the biggest social implication of migration, though rumours and perceived infidelity seemed to be a significant part of this. There were distinctions in attitudes, however, it was seemingly socially accepted that male migrants gone for long periods of time would engage in infidelity; whereas wives whose husbands had migrated abroad, who were accused of having extramarital relationships, were criticised more heavily. The impacts of migration were felt by other family members as well. It was reported that when fathers were absent, children would engage in bad behaviour and the elderly worried about their sons abroad and who would care for them – a role traditionally fulfilled by sons and their wives.

The effects of migration on women associated with migrants were arguably the greatest and could include a significant increase in vulnerability. It was reported that migration has increased violence against women. While their husbands were gone, women feared being targeted by thieves or the threat of rape and respondents reported that the threats increased if the woman was not living with her in-laws. However, there were also cases of rape within households committed by brother-in-laws or father-in-laws. Women were also targeted, befriended or blackmailed, by men wanting to gain access to the money they were receiving. Wives of migrants also faced increased workloads as they were doing the work of two people, but their efforts often went unnoticed. There were also health concerns for wives of migrants, not only physical health concerns from the increased workloads, but also sexual health concerns. Due to existing patriarchal norms, it is difficult for women to refuse to have sex with their husbands or request that protection is used, even if they are concerned about contracting HIV. Women were also aware of the damage that rumours can cause and would

modify their behaviour accordingly. However, in some cases, it was reported that the absence of husbands had empowered women; they were able to make decisions, become heads of households and attend community meetings. In cases where the community resisted these changes, it was family support that became an important factor in whether women were truly empowered.

Community support for migration and migrants was mixed. Communities provided loans to help prospective migrants, but at the same time seemed concerned about the lack of youth in villages and some communities treated the wives of migrants poorly. Upon their return, the treatment of migrants and their families seemed to be based on how well the migrant had financially done and how the money had been spent, including whether loans were provided to other community members. However, there was a big difference between how male and female migrants were perceived and most research participants indicated they thought women should not migrate. A woman who did migrate often needed permission from family; the work that she did abroad and her character would be perceived negatively and she would face rumours of infidelity and prostitution even if she did well. These negative perceptions could cause family breakdowns or, for unmarried women, make it harder to find husbands upon their return. However, in addition to the money a migrant brought back, their respect in the community depended on where they had gone, with the West being the most respected place to work, followed by the Gulf countries and Malaysia and then India. In some cases, doing well and having the respect of the community was found to help overcome caste-based discrimination, which was reportedly reduced while migrants were abroad. It was also observed that in some cases communities and families were becoming more positive about women who work outside the home and there was less stigma attached to their status as working women.

In terms of impacts on culture in the community, men were much more vocal than women and sighted concerns about funeral rituals, the lack of youth at weddings, impacts on festivals and the influence and adoption of other cultures and lifestyles. Migrants said their experiences had changed their cultural perspectives.

In terms of the Government of Nepal and its relationship to migration, most respondents complained that the government was both the reason for migration- as they were blamed for the lack of employment opportunities- and responsible for failures to effectively regulate migration and support migrants. However, the expectations of government support were high among some respondents. Criticism of the government was not reserved only for matters associated with migration; there were many other criticisms which point towards a wider problem in the relationship between the government and its citizens. In some cases though, government processes have had to be made available to women, as male family members, who would traditionally handle such responsibilities, were not present to carry them out. Respondents were, however, very critical that the government was not able to better regulate manpower companies.

Context background

Migration within Nepal and to other countries, especially to India and the Gulf states, is a major phenomenon in Nepal. According to estimates by the Department of Foreign Employment, more than 1,000 Nepalis leave the country every day to migrate for work to India, and this number is rising.⁴ Most of those migrating are young working age men,⁵ although women are also migrating.

Remittances are a major source of income for Nepal and this has led to a number of studies being carried out to understand the economic implications and benefits of external migration on development in Nepal. There is very limited research on the social implications of migration on the source communities, including the migrants' families.⁶ Given the high number of people migrating, it is expected that the social implications will be significant in both positive and negative ways. Previous research carried out by Saferworld⁷ indicates that migration poses significant challenges to roles and relationships within families, often resulting in family breakdown or an increase in violence, especially domestic violence. There is also evidence that migration is both a necessity as well as a trend among young men. This is particularly the case in remote villages where it is seen as the only opportunity to earn money to sustain their families and escape every-day village routine.

Research objectives

Given the poor evidence base to date on the social implications of youth migration in general and in the Mid-West and Far West in particular, the fifth conflict assessment takes an exploratory approach to gain an overview on three interlinked questions:

1. What are the implications migration has on interpersonal and family relationships?
2. What are the implications migration has on community relationships?
3. What are the implications migration has on the relationships with the state⁸?

⁴DoFE (2011). Data on Foreign Labour Migration, www.dofe.gov.np

⁵ According to a study by the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management and IoM (2010), approx. one third of working age men have migrated abroad.

⁶ Studies seeking to assess the situation in Nepal include Jagannath Adhikari and Mary Hobley (2011), Everyone is leaving – who will sow our fields? The Effects of Migration from Khotang District to the Gulf and Malaysia; Chandra Bhadra (2013), The impact of Foreign Labour Migration to Enhance Economic Security and Address VAW among Nepali Women Migrant Workers and Responsiveness of Local Governance to Ensure Safe Migration; Tika Ram Gautam (2005), Causes and Impact of Migration: A Sociological Study of Emigration From Kandebash, Baglung, Nepal. These studies focus on Kathmandu, Kaski, Sunsari, Baglung and Khotang districts.

⁷ Saferworld (2014), 'How can you be a marda if you beat your wife?' Notions of masculinities and violence in Eastern Nepal.

⁸ For the purposes of this assessment, 'state' refers to aspects that include government institutions and government procedures; decision making and participation in the political discourse and procedures; views, perceptions and activism around political issues such as federalism, identity, gender equality and social inclusion etc.

Under each of these headings the research focused on specific aspects within these domains. The specific aspects were agreed upon completion of the first field research phase. Potential focal areas included, for example, the link between migration and domestic violence, the potential of migration to reduce or increase/create social tensions, or implications of migration on local decision making.

Research findings

1. Reasons for, and typology of, migration in Nepal

As previously noted, there is a dearth of available literature and analysis on social implications of migration compared to its economic implications. However, for this research which explores the social implications of migration, what is important is why migrants choose to leave the country rather than how many are leaving.

Those interviewed reported that the overwhelming reasons for migration from Nepal are economic. However, there are sub-categories within this for those citing economic justifications.

The highest reported reason for economic migration was unemployment⁹ and underemployment¹⁰ in Nepal. Although Nepal's unemployment rate is not especially high (2.1% in 2008 according to the Government of Nepal¹¹) the high rate of under-utilised labour is more concerning (30%¹²) as is the very high rate of those engaged in 'vulnerable employment' (81%¹³). It is, therefore, easy to understand why many look abroad for work, especially given the demand for labour in countries such as Malaysia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. Individuals who are unemployed or underemployed have clear reasons for migrating.¹⁴ These views are heavily supported by the belief that while some could survive on privately owned small holdings, for others it would be more difficult and would require income supplementation. Many migrants held no land ownership and were at the whim of sporadic, temporary employment.¹⁵

⁹Unemployment is defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as the status of being out of work and looking for work; adapted from ILO Issues Paper No. 32 and Integration Working Paper No. 90 accessed from: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---integration/documents/publication/wcms_097760.pdf

¹⁰According to the ILO, underemployment exists when employed persons have not attained their full employment level in the sense of the [Employment Policy Convention](#) adopted by the International Labour Conference in 1964; accessed from: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1:0::NO::>

¹¹<http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/NLFS-2008%20Report.pdf>

¹²<http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/NLFS-2008%20Report.pdf>

¹³www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/download/nepal/pdf; The term vulnerable employment is defined as the sum of the employment status groups of own-account workers and contributing family workers.

¹⁴Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/10/2014

¹⁵Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 19/10/2014

The perceived lack of employment opportunities was felt even more strongly by Nepal's youth (people aged 16 – 40, according to the Government of Nepal) who represented 40.3% of the total population in 2010.¹⁶ With a population growth rate of 1.35% in 2011¹⁷ youth represent a higher proportion of the labour force. There is a perception of limited government investment in employment creation which means that the future for youth is often seen as being quite bleak.¹⁸ This highlights the perceived inadvertent role of the State in driving migration through the lack of employment generation in the country. This view was held by many respondents.¹⁹

Family and social pressure are also significant catalysts for migration, particularly for male youth. Many families and society in general, both male and female,²⁰ hold strongly to the view that Nepal's patriarchal system obligates men to provide for their family. One woman commented that *"due to patriarchal society people have [the] mentality that son should look after the parents and husband should look after the wife and children. So this kind of mentality has given pressure to men...due to this societal mentality, sons are compelled to migrate."*²¹ Even when the desire to migrate is not there, pressure from family or society can effectively force the migration process.

This level of societal pressure also extended to what was expressed as a 'culture of imitation.' Often the goal of migration is to supplement family earnings in Nepal to enable a better standard of living. However, one aspect of this was repeatedly cited as 'copycat' migration, or because they wanted the same goods and services as others who had migrated. So, whilst in many cases, the drive to migrate for employment was an opportunity to improve the family's living standards, in other cases it emerged out of greed and a desire to imitate others in the community.²²

Societal and economic pressures are inextricably linked as the driving forces behind migration. Un/underemployment is a significant factor in the decision to migrate, as is a community's perception of available employment opportunities. However, some respondents also reported that there are enough jobs in Nepal but the problem is that "people are ashamed to work in their own village."²³

¹⁶ <http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/National%20Report.pdf> accessed on 31/10/2014

¹⁷ <http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/National%20Report.pdf> accessed in 31/10/2014

¹⁸ Group discussion with family of migrant, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

¹⁹ Group interview with community members, female, Dang, 20/09/2014

²⁰ Saferworld (2014), 'How can you be a marda if you beat your wife?' Notions of masculinities and violence in Eastern Nepal.

²¹ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

²² Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

²³ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/10/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Saferworld (2014), 'How can you be a marda if you beat your wife?' Notions of masculinities and violence in Eastern Nepal.

Economic incentives drive migration, but it is the socioeconomic issues that dictate who migrates. Almost all interviewees confirmed that most migrants were young men. Migrating men are under pressure to provide for their family and this social expectation reveals the firmly entrenched gender roles. As well as pressure to provide for the family, this expectation also reveals a lot about the role of women and how they are viewed in Nepali society. The distribution of labour is that men are responsible for earning while women are responsible for maintaining the home. This automatically opens the way for men to migrate whereas women are blocked from doing so by family members. In some cases women are actively prevented or discouraged from migrating and are pressurised to remain in the home. Moreover, “*when they [women] go abroad, the way society looks at them is different...they say ‘this woman has gone abroad’ and they look down at them in a bad way.*” This view was offered by male migrants who felt that women are prevented from entering the workforce due to socio-cultural norms (see Section 6.i. for further details).²⁴ There is the perception that “*if women go out [abroad] the family will disintegrate*” and this limits, but not obstructs completely, the number of women who migrate.

The type and location of migration is also influenced by socioeconomic class. With the ease of migration to India, it means that those from lower socioeconomic classes are more likely to move to India. Most of this type of migration tends to be seasonal, which enables poorer families to supplement their income without being away from home for extended periods of time. For this reason, seasonal migration was seen as the preserve of the Tharu community whereas Hill Pahadi populations tend to migrate for longer periods of time.²⁵ In contrast, “*for [a] higher class family the target for foreign employment is European country [while] for middle class it is Gulf countries.*”²⁶

2. Issues faced by migrants in the country of migration

Despite the desire and pressure to migrate, it is evident that Nepali migrants face a raft of issues in the countries they migrate to. Recent high profile reports from Western and Nepali media have highlighted the risks and conditions faced by migrants, particularly in the Gulf countries.²⁷ This research reinforces these claims and details the ways in which those difficulties manifest upon migrants’ return.

²⁴ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 20/09/2014

²⁵ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁶ Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁷ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/nepal-once-known-for-farming-now-exports-people-migrants-earn-big-but-face-risks/2014/03/23/5858ca52-8441-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html;
<http://www.theguardian.com/football/2014/feb/16/qatar-world-cup-400-deaths-nepalese>;
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA31/007/2011/en/b58f0185-455d-425c-bc4f-d6b7fe309524/asa310072011en.pdf>

i. Problems with manpower companies and agents

Migrants, families of migrants and members of civil society repeatedly raised problems with manpower companies and agents.²⁸ Their concerns centred on the belief that manpower companies and agents cheated migrants,²⁹ with almost all interviewees concluding this. The most common re-occurring complaint was the alleged promises made by the manpower company/agent regarding both the type of job and the salary; very often both promises were reneged on. The established *modus operandi* seems to be that migrants submit their passport to the company/agent who arranges the visa. They are then given paperwork (which often they don't understand) and are told by the company/agent to only show certain parts of the paperwork to certain individuals. On arrival at their destination country their passports are taken from them and their contracts replaced with new contracts and different terms and conditions. The newly arrived migrant is then forced to take up work they had not agreed to do, at a rate lower than originally contracted.³⁰ Another example given included the company/agent holding the passport and payment made in Nepal when an individual has changed their mind forcing the individual to make full payment and to migrate.³¹ Other examples given were of the company/agent who, after receiving full payment from the migrants, informed them that they were going to one place but took them via India to another,³² or the company/agent simply absconded with the migrants' money.³³

In all these scenarios, from the beginning, the migrant is in a vulnerable position and is forced to accept the changed conditions. Those working to increase awareness of the migration process among potential migrants felt that brokers working in the districts had done much to gain the trust of those they were sending abroad with promises of the financial benefits of migration.³⁴ In some cases this trust in manpower agents led to the trafficking of individuals who believed they were taking on a domestic or office job. In Kailali district a number of civil society members reported having rescued women from manpower agents who were promised work in Kuwait but were being taken to Saudi Arabia or who had been forced into prostitution in Indian cities.³⁵

²⁸ 'Manpower companies' and 'agents' refers to those companies and individuals who facilitate the migration of individuals through advising on and managing the process including relevant paperwork and linkage to jobs in destination country.

²⁹ Key informant interview with journalist, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁰ Key informant interview with migrant, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³¹ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

³² Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³³ Group discussion with civil society, male, Kailali, 2014/09/09

³⁴ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

³⁵ Group discussion with civil society, male, Kailali, no date given; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Kailali, 19/09/2014

ii. Vulnerability of migrants

Many migrants reported being in extremely vulnerable positions in their country of migration and this view seems to be supported by family and community members. Migrants, particularly *“people from remote villages, are not aware about the rules and policies of migration. They do not know the right process and how to get these information”*³⁶ and are generally poorly informed. Invariably they do not speak the local language, are not aware of the local laws and customs and have been forced to relinquish their passports on arrival. This issue was prevalent for migration to Malaysia and the Gulf countries even in cases where family or community members had migrated previously. Migration to India, whether seasonal or longer-term, was generally deemed to be easier and better understood. This was partly due to there being a longer history of migration, but also due to there being fewer restrictions (no paperwork requirements, similar culture, broader understanding of the Hindi language etc.).

Some migrants spoke of good living and working conditions, but approximately two-thirds of those interviewed highlighted poor conditions and ill-treatment by employers. A number of claims were made about being forced to work in jobs that were different to those agreed prior to departure.³⁷ Male respondents described having to work outside in the desert in extreme heat.³⁸ Female respondents described having to work with only a few hours of sleep or inadequate food provision.³⁹ Migrants also reported abuse at the hands of their employers.⁴⁰

These might be more extreme examples but certainly a large number of migrants in the Gulf countries faced undue pressure and poor treatment with some conditions akin to slavery. Women migrants faced an additional threat. Along with verbal and physical abuse, also experienced by men, women migrants were at risk of sexual violence at the hands of their employers. Male migrants, family members of migrants (male and female), community members and civil society working with women migrants all reported instances of sexual harassment and rape of female migrants when abroad. However no female migrants disclosed this during interviews. The silence of women who have experienced sexual abuse abroad can in part be explained by the way they are viewed by society upon their return: *“If women go abroad, then people will look suspiciously to them...[the] Far-West is the region where women are always discriminated [against]...Women are always controlled.”*⁴¹ The issue of social stigmatisation of female migrants will be discussed in more detail in section 6(i).

³⁶Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

³⁷Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁸Key informant interview with migrant, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁹Group interview with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

⁴⁰Key informant interview with migrant, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

⁴¹Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

From the research it was clear that migrants' silence about the conditions they faced abroad was deliberate and was seemingly used as a coping mechanism. Migrants face significant pressure to migrate in the first place. The pressure might come directly from their families and the community or economic pressures associated with poverty. This pressure increases during migration because of the debt incurred that enabled them to migrate, which must be repaid.⁴² Migrants were aware that their family would have to bear the brunt of this, particularly when contracts were changed and wages were lower than agreed. Many migrants complained that their family was only concerned with the sending of remittances and were not concerned about their wellbeing but migrants also stated that they do not discuss the issues they face as they do not want to worry their family.⁴³

For migrants this silence is also driven by fear of being judged if they admit to being employed in menial work. This not only causes significant 'mental hardship'⁴⁴ but also creates problems within the family. The lack of open discussion regarding the hardships migrants face means migrants often lack basic support from their family which makes long-term separation even more difficult. With the reality about the migrants' experiences hidden, the family believe everything is going well. This can cause issues with trust when the migrant cannot provide additional financial support because of illness or injury. When illness or injury is linked to a lack of financial support, the family become suspicious and assume that the money has been spent on 'immoral things' such as gambling, excessive drinking and prostitution.⁴⁵ The issue of family relations is discussed in more detail in section 4(i).

When migrants return to Nepal there is so much insecurity, which increases their vulnerability. This is particularly the case when crossing the border from India. Nepali migrants regularly cross the Indo-Nepal border when engaged in seasonal migration and when they return home for family or community commitments. At the border they allegedly face extortion and robbery from local organised criminal gangs and a few Indian border guards who are aware they have large sums of money on their person. In dealings with officials, particularly around festival time, they might be requested to pay a bribe, while for others money is confiscated with no receipt. INR 500 and 1000 banknotes were prohibited in Nepal at the time of data collection and analysis; it is claimed that Indian border officials confiscate these notes. The migrant can do little about it and even if they complain to police in Nepal the money is not seen again. Returning migrants are also at risk from criminal actors/groups that befriend them and after gaining their trust, drug them and rob them of their savings and other valuable personal belongings, adding another layer of insecurity for returning migrants.⁴⁶

⁴² Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

⁴³ Group interview with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

⁴⁴ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

⁴⁵ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

⁴⁶ Key informant interview with police personnel, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

iii. Health issues

Migrants often experience health issues as a result of the difficulties and pressures from their working and living environments and lifestyle choices made while living abroad.

Due to long working hours, tough working conditions and poor diets, migrants suffer from a number of psychological and physical health issues. Migrants can experience psychological pressure as a result of the conditions they are living under and the anxiety about their families in Nepal. In some cases this can impact on the migrant's general wellbeing. This is particularly the case for male migrants who, due to patriarchal expectations, are unable to express emotion or vulnerability and are susceptible to stress and addiction.⁴⁷

Migrants reported a number of physical ailments including respiratory illness, jaundice, cancer, lethargy, infertility, high blood pressure, gastritis and exhaustion caused by their working and living conditions. Although these claims cannot be validated without obtaining a complete medical history and analysis, the current policy of having health checks prior to migration but no return health check,⁴⁸ means it would be difficult to diagnose these illnesses. Given the obvious concerns around the working and living conditions of Nepali's working abroad, it would be reasonable to expect that a number of migrants would become ill at some point. This is particularly the case for migrating youth who are often compelled to work in jobs they had not signed up for. These jobs often carry health risks as they require the young migrant to perform tasks that their bodies are not physically developed to do.⁴⁹

Migrants identified a number of illnesses they contracted but the most significant concern by far related to HIV/AIDS. There were numerous reports of migrants returning from abroad with HIV/AIDS. Most reported cases of migrants returning with HIV/AIDS were migrants who had been in India, however a few cases were also reported from the Gulf countries. Cases were reported in all three districts, but more cases were reported in Kanchanpur. As with other illnesses, the diagnoses had not been confirmed, however, the sheer number of reports would indicate this is an issue- of perception, if not reality. What was identified, however, was the belief that the pressure migrants are under while away from their families can lead them to become involved in 'bad things' (harmful behaviours/practices) such as drinking, drugs, gambling and adultery.⁵⁰ It was also alleged that "*women have been working as sex workers in Gulf countries for earning extra money*" and are at risk of HIV and/or other forms of STIs.⁵¹ It is evident that these types of illnesses, particularly HIV/AIDS, can have far-reaching impacts on migrants when they return.

⁴⁷Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

⁴⁸Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

⁴⁹Key informant interview with journalist, Dang, 18/09/2014

⁵⁰Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

⁵¹Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014

Another health issue raised was industrial accidents and deaths, which has been a topic of recent discussion in the media.⁵² Migrants and those in civil society reported the loss of limbs and head injuries resulting from accidents with machinery.⁵³ As with other problems, migrants who had experienced industrial accidents did not inform their families because they didn't want to worry them. These migrants returned to work and continued to send remittances.⁵⁴ However, as wages dropped because of difficulties performing work due to the injury, the value of remittances dropped, causing financial difficulties at home. Moreover, when injured migrants return to Nepal their ability to engage in economic activity was limited, making them a potential burden on the family.

3. Financial and livelihood issues

Although this report is concerned with the social implications of migration in Nepal, financial and livelihood issues play a part in this as they link to different aspects of social life.

i. Agricultural issues associated with migration

There is a perception that the agriculture sector in Nepal has changed because of urbanisation and migration with fewer people in rural areas able to manage the agricultural sector effectively.⁵⁵ While there were strong perceptions that agricultural production is diminishing, agriculture still plays an enormous role in the lives of most rural Nepalis. In most cases, migration and some form of agriculture go hand-in-hand, especially in cases of seasonal migration to India as migrants often return home for harvesting season. However, with the vast majority of migrants being young males, their absence can create problems for those who remain in terms of managing agricultural commitments. Some families sell or lease land in order to pay the manpower companies. In these cases families lose the productive value of that land,⁵⁶ which can have significant implications if the migrant does not send as much remittance as expected. The type of agricultural work that can be conducted once migrants return depends on how the money was utilised. Please see the next section in this chapter for more details.

The central problem with the issue of agriculture is labour. When migrant workers are away they reduce the number of people available to engage in agricultural activity.⁵⁷ The lack of labour is generally addressed in one of two ways. In most families the women assume the

⁵²<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/14/migrant-workers-dying-qatar-world-cup>;
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/nepal-once-known-for-farming-now-exports-people-migrants-earn-big-but-face-risks/2014/03/23/5858ca52-8441-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html

⁵³ Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014

⁵⁴ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

⁵⁵ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

⁵⁶ Group interview with family of migrants, males, Kailali, 19/09/2014

⁵⁷ Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

agricultural duties of men while they are abroad.⁵⁸ In other cases the family will pay day labourers to assist with agricultural work. Often employing local daily labourers, invariably from the Tharu community who have been marginalised and do not own land⁵⁹ or sometimes labour is sought from India. However, there is a cost implication of employing labourers and a number of reports were made regarding the increasing expense of hiring labour⁶⁰ and the quality of work from those who have no investment in the land.⁶¹ Most families address the shortfall using a combination of the two options but both place an additional burden on the family.

It is, however, important to note that the labour deficit and the increased burden on families of migrants is mainly an issue with non-seasonal migration. Seasonal migration is generally planned around agricultural duties; migrants do their tilling and planting at their home before going to India for other employment. They return when it is time to harvest.⁶²

Some families reported no problems in meeting agricultural obligations. For these families, it was often the case that the community provided the additional support required.⁶³ Evidently, for some migrant families they overcame migration-related problems by actively supporting each other. This demonstrates a positive social impact of migration.

ii. The utilisation of migration remittances

One of the key issues of migration was the utilisation- perceived and actual- of migration remittances. Many reported effective use of remittances, which helped the development of individual families but contributed to both stronger and weaker community relations. A large number of respondents highlighted poor utilisation of remittances, which increased the burden on families, caused family problems and contributed to community tension.

Many respondents, though overwhelmingly men, felt that remittances had not been utilised effectively. This view came predominantly from male members of civil society although migrants, family members of migrants and community members also supported it. These individuals were of the view that remittances were used to purchase modern gadgets and jewellery and to dine in restaurants, instead of being put to productive use (business, land etc.).⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Group discussion with migrants, males and females, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group interview with community members, women, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Dang, 08/09/2014

⁵⁹ Group interview with family of migrant, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

⁶⁰ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

⁶¹ Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

⁶² Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

⁶³ Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

⁶⁴ Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali,

The debate surrounding the effective utilisation of remittances seems to revolve around whether the spending was productive or not. Most respondents in civil society and a number of community members claimed money was not spent productively nor was it invested in activities that would provide an income for the family and contribute to the economy.⁶⁵

Whilst there are examples of poor use of remittances, the productive nature of spending is largely a function of the family situation. Most families of migrants paid off the debt incurred in order for the migration to take place- this being a priority. After that a variety of effective uses of the money were made, the predominant use being the management of household expenses. Subsequently, *“most people buy land and build a house on it and use the earned money to educate their children.”*⁶⁶ Indeed, when individuals were demonstrating the effectiveness of their spending, or being used as an example of wise spending, it was these three areas that received the most focus.⁶⁷ These spending patterns seem productive in the sense that they elevate the family’s living standard, help generate additional agricultural revenue and invest in the future generation. Furthermore, a number of respondents reported having invested the earnings into small businesses such as beauty parlours;⁶⁸ livestock such as chickens, cows and goats,⁶⁹ small shops;⁷⁰ fisheries and farming.⁷¹

The utilisation of remittances depends on a number of factors: the economic situation of the family, the earnings of the migrant, the level of agreement between migrant and family regarding spending and the nature of the individual with access to the money. What is evident is that the community judges the way money is spent. In situations where remittances are deemed to have been spent wisely the family is generally well regarded and enjoy community respect. In some communities a system of loaning is apparent. The initial loan for migration is often taken from family, neighbours and community members who provide the loan in the knowledge they will receive some benefit in the future. Migrants will also lend money to fellow migrants while abroad for them to send to their family in cases of emergencies. On return, families who have managed their resources well often support their neighbours by

16/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 17/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014

⁶⁵Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

⁶⁶Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

⁶⁷Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group interview with community member, female, Kailali, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Dang, 20/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Dang, 20/09/2014

⁶⁸Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

⁶⁹Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

⁷⁰Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

⁷¹Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

providing loans.⁷² These examples demonstrate a level of social capital, which is strengthened through migration.

However a perceived ‘good’ utilisation of remittances does not always lead to good standing in the community. Many respondents, particularly civil society, were critical of migrants and their families for the way in which they spent their money, despite admitting that it had been spent on things such as houses, land, and education. It is difficult to isolate the reasons behind this criticism. It could stem from a lack of understanding of the family’s situation or it could be envy. Certainly the issue of remittance spending was widely discussed and respondents were not afraid to judge how others were spending.

When remittances are judged to have been poorly utilised there appear to be social consequences. Families deemed to have ‘wasted’ or ‘misused’ earnings are openly criticised with allegations that wives “*show off*” and “*do not respect others*”⁷³ or that “*they have not been able to save money because of their habit of gambling and drinking liquor.*”⁷⁴ Similarly, there are assertions that “*families start to have luxurious life and children are spoiled*”⁷⁵ or that wives “*misuse the money and even elope with other men.*”⁷⁶ The impact of migration on children is discussed in more detail in section 4.iii. The issue of infidelity is discussed in more detail in section 4.ii. This type of criticism is often reserved for “*people from poorer backgrounds... [who] do not have any control [with the money they suddenly acquire].*”⁷⁷ Overall, it seems that most of this disapproval comes from men although a few women supported this view – mostly older women. However, it appears that men are more vocal about how money should be spent. This could be a feature of the patriarchal system, or maybe because it is mostly men that endure the hardships associated with being a migrant and therefore have higher expectations of what migration should deliver.

iii. Empowerment of migrants

Respondents often reported that migration led to them feeling more empowered. This was due to two key reasons: first, the process of migration, being in a different context as a result of being in a new country/environment and learning new things, gave migrants a new experience and in some cases, more confidence; and secondly migrants learnt new skills or abilities, which meant that when remittances had been utilised effectively, returning migrants were able to engage in more profitable economic activities which elevated their living standards.

One reported benefit of migration was an increase in confidence among returned migrants. The majority of migrants are poorly educated because they did not complete their schooling

⁷²Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

⁷³Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

⁷⁴Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

⁷⁵Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

⁷⁶Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

⁷⁷Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

and had very little experience of life outside their homes and community. Migration broadened their perspectives, even to what some might regard as inconsequential matters, such as flying on an airplane to a different country.⁷⁸ Perhaps more importantly, migration has the potential to instil in an individual a greater belief in themselves. The difficulties migrants endure abroad teach them that they can have more control over their lives and can help improve their work ethic.⁷⁹ This manifests in their active engagement in the economy in which they take responsibility for their income and work for themselves.⁸⁰

This increased confidence can be greater in female migrants who experience a broadening of their mind-set as they are no longer constrained by the patriarchal expectations of Nepali society.⁸¹ For returning female migrants, this increase in confidence can create problems. Re-entering the patriarchal society after a period of relative freedom sometimes caused problems because women were expected to resume their previous roles. This was reported to be the case in the Far-West where patriarchal traditions and culture are stronger.⁸²

Migration can also lead to increased social awareness and life skills. For instance, returned migrants tend to be less naïve as a result of their experiences abroad⁸³ and have a better understanding of societal responsibility.⁸⁴ A greater appreciation of the value of education was also realised, both for migrants and their children.⁸⁵ These observations were supported by civil society, which believes that migration has taught people how to manage money, manage their and their family's health and how to educate their family on health issues.⁸⁶

Beyond endowing migrants with greater confidence, awareness and life skills, migration can also lead to new skills that increase their employability upon return, particularly when remittances have been utilised in such a way as to enable this. A better work ethic and the application of these new skills, has enabled returned migrants to engage in different types of employment that contribute to their local economy including: construction contractor and vehicle importer,⁸⁷ livestock (cattle, boar, goat and fish) producer,⁸⁸ electricians and plumbers,⁸⁹ and milk producer.⁹⁰ Although the majority of these examples came from Kanchanpur, it was evident across the three districts that skill development increased

⁷⁸Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

⁷⁹Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

⁸⁰Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014

⁸¹Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

⁸²Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

⁸³Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/2014/09

⁸⁴Group discussion with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

⁸⁵Group interview with migrant, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

⁸⁶Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

⁸⁷Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

⁸⁸Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

⁸⁹Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Dang, 08/09/2014

⁹⁰Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 19/09/2014

confidence and awareness and effective use of remittances had increased economic opportunities for some returning migrants and their families. The potential value of this was highlighted by one respondent: *“if the migrant is very active, then he will apply his skill in the development of the society. On the other hand, if the migrant is not so active, then he will not do anything for the society.”*⁹¹

Although there is evidence that migration brings benefits in terms of empowerment, it can create problems. As previously mentioned, many migrants are poorly educated and the lure of migration can tempt those still in school to abandon their studies.⁹² This can cause problems when migrants return.⁹³ Their lack of education often means that the work migrants engage in when abroad is low level because they have not had the opportunity to develop their employability skills.⁹⁴ Those who sold land to pay the costs of migration are often unable to rebuy the land even if their earnings abroad were good because wages were spent on living costs rather than savings. As a result the *“economic status [of the migrant] again goes down to the same status”*⁹⁵ as before they migrated.

For some these outcomes are caused by a lack of planning on behalf of the migrant prior to their departure.⁹⁶ Poor planning causes two problems: in the short term it can result in a ‘migration cycle trap’ where returning migrants face difficulties finding sustainable employment and opt to migrate again;⁹⁷ in the longer term it creates developmental problems for the country as there is little investment in youth as they constitute a large proportion of the population migrating elsewhere for employment.⁹⁸

iv. Financial problems of migration

There are a number of financial problems associated with migration: issues related to a lack of or limited funding for families of migrants; and family disputes associated with remittances.

A lack of or limited funding for families of migrants occurs for several reasons and is associated with a number of problems. Respondents often reported that migrants only sent small amounts of money to their family. Others reported that this was because the manpower company had allegedly cheated them.⁹⁹ These examples were relatively widespread among

⁹¹ Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

⁹² Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

⁹³ Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

⁹⁴ Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014

⁹⁵ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

⁹⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 2014/09/09

⁹⁷ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

⁹⁸ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

⁹⁹ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

respondents and affected a number of migrants' families.¹⁰⁰ Another reason was that migrants, mostly men, were not sending the full amount of earnings because they had been spent on drinking, gambling and prostitutes.¹⁰¹ In these cases remittances are generally sent when the migrant initially goes abroad but taper off as time passes and the level of contact between the migrant and their family diminishes.¹⁰²

The lack of, or limited, remittances might be caused by migrants being paid less than they had been promised, but more often than not it came down to poor planning – particularly poor financial planning.¹⁰³ Regardless of the cause, the result is an increased burden on the migrants' family. Not only does the migrants' family have to cope with what is usually the household's main breadwinner being out of the country, but they are also obligated to repay any loans associated with the migration process and any other loans, as well as managing the household, all on a reduced budget.¹⁰⁴ This can result in tension between family members and the community if outstanding loans came from within the community.¹⁰⁵

For families of migrants who lack funds, there are very few options available. Invariably other family members will be required to work in some capacity.¹⁰⁶ Often mothers take on labouring work which *"is very difficult for women and has some sort of negative impact on their children too."*¹⁰⁷ Another option is to sell land to cover the cost of living.¹⁰⁸ However, this can be difficult as land ownership in Nepal is complex and selling usually requires the husband to be present. In cases where there is no communication between the migrant and his spouse this may not be possible. Many families suffering from a lack of funds seek further loans; however, this creates additional problems.¹⁰⁹ For those in desperate situations, it was reported that women at home not receiving money from their migrant husbands are vulnerable, or compelled to engage in risky or illegal activities to make ends meet, such as the production of alcohol, being compelled to have an affair with another man as a way to survive,¹¹⁰ or even prostitution.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁰ Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Dang, 08/09/2014; Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

¹⁰¹ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁰² Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

¹⁰³ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

¹⁰⁴ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁰⁵ Group interview with family of migrants, male, no district provided, 18/09/2014

¹⁰⁶ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

¹⁰⁷ Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁰⁸ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

¹⁰⁹ Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Dang, 09/09/2014

¹¹⁰ Group interview with community members, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

¹¹¹ Key informant interview with police personnel, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

Another significant financial issue associated with migration is that of family disputes over remittances. A large number of respondents across all three districts and both genders reported that this was a significant cause of problems in the family while a migrant was abroad. The problem centres on who is sent the remittance money and how that money is distributed within the family. This is particularly problematic when the male migrant is married.¹¹² It is only an issue with married male migrants, as married female migrants are expected to send money to their husband, whereas an unmarried female migrant is expected to send money to her parents.

While there seems to be general agreement on this issue of remittances, it was also reported that when remittances are sent to migrants' parents fewer problems arise but of course this is not always the case.¹¹³ In isolated cases the wife may be at risk when the money is sent to the migrants' parents. If there is family conflict over the money, the wife is most vulnerable because she lives outside of her own family home.¹¹⁴

In most cases remittances were sent in the name of the wife and many respondents reported that this caused problems over who controlled the money. Some respondents alleged that the wife neglected her in-laws and did not provide them with any money, or at least there was a perception of this.¹¹⁵ Some respondents stated that other family members (brothers) complained they were not receiving a share of the migrants' earnings from the spouse.¹¹⁶ Some women community members believed that "*their son should send money to them [the parents] and not the wife*"¹¹⁷ adding another layer of complexity. When wives are the recipients of remittances, it can create arguments within the family. Wives residing in the home of their in-laws are criticised and mistreated.¹¹⁸ This can lead to an erosion of trust¹¹⁹ and potentially family separation with the migrant, spouse and children living as a nuclear family as opposed to living with the parents and siblings of the husband's family, the traditional practice in most communities in Nepal.¹²⁰

Problems within the family over who has access to and control of remittance money depend "*on the nature of family, the level of understanding they have.*"¹²¹ If the family communicates and plans well and had a positive relationship prior to the migrant's departure for

¹¹²Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

¹¹³Group interview with community members, female, Dang, 20/09/2014

¹¹⁴Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

¹¹⁵Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Key informant interview with local government, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

¹¹⁶Group discussion with family of migrants, male Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹¹⁷Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

¹¹⁸Group interview with community members, female, Kanchapur, 21/09/2014

¹¹⁹Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

¹²⁰Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹²¹Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

employment then these types of problems can be avoided.¹²² One solution to avoid familial conflict was to send money separately, “*some money for father and some money for wife.*”¹²³ For families who live as a nuclear family or who do not have in-laws these problems were not an issue and for some families who did live together “*it does not make difference to send money to me or to her. We [all] have to repay the loan and make other expenses. So it is good.*”¹²⁴

Another familial dispute regarding remittances is between the migrant and his spouse or family over perceived misuse of money, not sending money and expectations the family have of the migrant. As discussed previously, migrants face a number of difficulties when working abroad and understandably they want remittances to be spent productively, especially when considering the pressure they may be under from family members over who receives the money. When returning husbands feel this money has been misused and is unaccounted for it can cause problems between spouses (or the family member who receives the money if not the wife).¹²⁵ This was reported by families of migrants who felt that there was sufficient communication as well as those who felt there was inadequate communication between them and the migrant, once s/he was abroad. This can affect the level of trust between husband and wife,¹²⁶ which can ultimately result in divorce. The issue of familial relations will be discussed in more detail in section 4.i.

For a number of different reasons outlined earlier, migrants are not always able to send the desired amount of money back home to their families. When this happens the family can put more pressure on the migrant because they have to cope with limited finances¹²⁷ or it causes further erosion of trust as the “*wife or parents start to think that husband or son [is] spending the money on other things.*”¹²⁸ The level of expectation placed on migrants by their family compounds this pressure. A number of respondents commented that migrants felt their families only ever enquired about money and showed only limited interest in their wellbeing.¹²⁹ Family members are influenced by what community members say about how much migrants are earning.¹³⁰ This impacts on the level of trust between migrants and their family as “*families are only concern[ed] about their demands and they are unaware of what [s]he is facing abroad.*”¹³¹

¹²² Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹²³ Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

¹²⁴ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹²⁵ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Dang, 20/09/2014

¹²⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 22/09/2014

¹²⁷ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

¹²⁸ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

¹²⁹ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

¹³⁰ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

¹³¹ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 19/09/2014

4. The family and migration

Migration has significant consequences for the family. Financial issues before, during and after migration place pressure on families. Having a family member, particularly the head of the household, away for sustained periods of time can compound this pressure. Migration is happening on such a large scale that the impact on many families is profound.¹³² This section considers the ways in which migration affects family dynamics and provides important information about the social implications of migration.

i. Family disintegration

Migration can create a number of significant threats to family stability and most respondents discussed the matter of family extensively. In any family, the absence of a significant family member can place an undue burden on the family. When a parent is missing, the spouse and the children in particular are affected,¹³³ whereas an absent sibling might have less of an impact. In any event, *“if he [the migrant] had good relations with everyone in the family, his absence will be felt by everyone in the family.”*¹³⁴ Moreover, for the migrant themselves if they *“do not have any time to spend with wife, children and family, one cannot be happy.”*¹³⁵

Families who share problems¹³⁶ and families who consult each other¹³⁷ seem better equipped to manage the absence; communication is crucial to this. These types of families tend to have good communication, utilising available technologies to remain in contact –some on a daily basis. Even for these families problems arise but although separation is not easy it is manageable.¹³⁸ However, for some families communication may be more complicated. This may be due to older generations being unfamiliar with communication technology and leaving communication to younger people.¹³⁹ For others communication is minimal or even non-existent. This tends to happen in families where the migrant is not regularly sending money home.¹⁴⁰ As well as the financial implications of this (discussed in the previous section) the lack of communication is very stressful for the remaining family who have to manage the situation with no contact from their spouse.

Communication plays a key role in spousal relations, which can be significantly strained by migration.¹⁴¹ The separation of spouses through migration creates a number of problems. The lack of intimacy between husband and wife emerged regularly as an issue.¹⁴² Physical

¹³²Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014

¹³³The impact of migrant on children will be discussed in section 4.iii

¹³⁴Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

¹³⁵Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹³⁶Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹³⁷Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

¹³⁸Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

¹³⁹Key informant interview with family member of migrant, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

¹⁴⁰Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

¹⁴¹Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁴²Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

distance can also lead to emotional distance as a result of poor communication and feelings that either the migrant or the remaining spouse does not understand the hardship the other is going through.¹⁴³ Furthermore, people change in response to different environments and this can cause problems with how the couples interact; these types of changes may not be well received and can create differences upon return.¹⁴⁴

Respondents reported that migration had a significant impact on spousal relationships and described how it affected trust between them. This issue was, however, discussed quite differently between male and female respondents. Male respondents discussed this as an issue directly between the husband and wife in which suspicion and a lack of trust was seen as a key outcome of migration,¹⁴⁵ although this depended on the quality of their relationship and level of communication prior to migration.¹⁴⁶ It was, therefore, considered important for men that *“before going for foreign employment, there must be some family discussion between husband and wife. Husband has to trust his wife. If you do not have any trust, then there will be family tensions anytime.”*¹⁴⁷

Female respondents rarely discussed trust issues between spouses in the same terms; they spoke in detail about the role of the extended family and community in fomenting distrust. Both male and female respondents felt that external influences contributed to the breakdown in trust within marriages because of gossip and rumours within the community.¹⁴⁸ Although men recognised this as an issue¹⁴⁹ it was brought up more often by female respondents. Irrespective of whether it is the husband or wife who migrates, stories will circulate. If the husband is abroad he will hear stories about his wife with other men, or his wife will hear stories of him misbehaving abroad. If the woman is abroad the husband will be told she is sleeping with other men. The issue of how women are treated by society, both as a remaining family member and as a female migrant will be discussed in more detail in sections 5.i and 6.i. Some of this gossiping may be light-hearted or done in jest, but a lot of it appears malicious and is spread by family members who are in dispute¹⁵⁰ and by community members. Both cause significant damage to spousal relationships.¹⁵¹ Overall, these rumours tended to favour men, both migrants and husbands of female migrants. This is a reflection of the broader patriarchal system that exists in these communities. Women were found to be

¹⁴³Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

¹⁴⁴Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014; Key informant interview with manpower agent, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

¹⁴⁵Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

¹⁴⁶Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁴⁷Key informant interview with local government, Kailali, 21/09/2014

¹⁴⁸Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 19/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, women, Dang, 18/09/2014

¹⁴⁹Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

¹⁵⁰Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

¹⁵¹Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

discouraged from migrating abroad for work at the community level and those whose husbands were abroad were carefully watched by community members who felt that in the absence of male family members, women would disregard traditional practices such as wearing certain clothes or develop friendships with other men.

Migration can also lead to problems within the extended family. As with spouses, adequate planning prior to migration is important. When the family has been consulted, adequate plans have been made¹⁵² and the migrant goes with the family's consent and blessing¹⁵³ there are fewer problems within the extended family. However, beyond the financial problems discussed in section three, two problems seem to arise within the extended family: problems between siblings and problems with in-laws.

With finance being the biggest motivation for migration, it is unsurprising that it fuels family problems. Respondents reported that when one family member migrates there is an expectation that remittances will be shared between the whole family. Respondents explained how in the absence of one sibling, the others will step in to assist in caring for their children and working on the land.¹⁵⁴ However, this can create tensions between siblings if either sibling becomes jealous¹⁵⁵ or aggrieved when, for example, one sibling feels the other is not sharing resources or that the sibling at home is not performing his or her duty adequately.

However, the most common problems are with in-laws. As previously stated, when remittances are sent to the wife this can cause disputes with in-laws. Beyond this, however, relations, particularly between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, can be strained. In some cases, deterioration of trust in spousal relations were said to be the result of strained relationships between the mother and daughter-in-law. In accordance with Nepali culture, the daughter-in-law must reside with her husbands' family and is obliged to follow their rules. When the marriage is new this can be difficult as the wife finds herself in an unfamiliar environment and is alone in a new home without her husband. Some wives, whose husbands have migrated abroad, will leave the husbands' family home and return to their parental home while their husband is away.¹⁵⁶ When the wife remains in the husbands' family home she may be regarded with suspicion when out of the home.¹⁵⁷ This appears to stem from the idea that *"no mother-in-law takes her daughter-in-law as her daughter and no daughter-in-law takes her mother-in-law as her own mother"*, reiterating the existing gendered barriers which come from strong patriarchal norms and values.¹⁵⁸ This can cause tension within the family and on some occasions requires the involvement of the husband to resolve the matter. This creates more pressure for the husband working abroad.

¹⁵²Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

¹⁵³Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

¹⁵⁴Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁵⁵Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁵⁶Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁵⁷Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

¹⁵⁸Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

Experiences will vary according to each family.¹⁵⁹ When the relationship between the wife and her in-laws becomes irreparable, it is not uncommon for the wife to set up home away from her in-laws and this seems to ease the pressure. In this type of situation it is common for the wife to move to an urban area. Moving to an urban area enables children to go to better schools. In some cases, the husband requests that their wife moves to town and places their children in private schools.¹⁶⁰ The establishment of the nuclear family comes at the cost of breaking up the extended family and this creates a different set of problems. For those moving to towns and cities, they *“do not have social capital and there has been increased suspicion and misunderstandings in the relationship between wife and husband.”*¹⁶¹ This increases the pressure on the migrant’s wife and increases the likelihood of spousal tension. There were also concerns from parents or elderly family members regarding provision of care. This issue will be discussed in more detail in section 4.iii. Furthermore, *“after return, the same lifestyle cannot be achieved. This has severe problems in the family”*¹⁶² as *“when he [the migrant] returns back, there will be nothing. He cannot work in cities and they have to return back to village. So there is no any continuity.”*¹⁶³

ii. Infidelity: perceived and actual

Infidelity is the most significant reason for the breakdown in trust between husband and wife and within families. Infidelity was the single most significant social implication of migration discussed by respondents; in all interviews this issue was brought up. However, in discussing infidelity and its relationship to migration it is important to note that the discussions by respondents on this subject were a mixture of fact and fiction and often illustrated underlying notions of how men and women should behave - a result of strong patriarchal norms and values. There is no doubt that infidelity occurs in relation to migration, however much of the discussion appeared to be based on hearsay. Respondents declared that infidelity was rife among migrants and their families but were clear that it was not happening in ‘my family’ or ‘my village’. Generally infidelity was seen as something that happened elsewhere and was heard about through a range of sources. Although the claims about infidelity could never be verified to an acceptable degree, in many cases this does not matter. Rumours of infidelity have done as much damage to familial and societal trust as actual infidelity has.

As with the issue of family disintegration, the way in which infidelity was discussed differed. There were more allegations of infidelity of the spouse of migrants, overwhelmingly women, made by both men and women, compared to allegations against male migrants. Few respondents held the view that both men and women, or migrant and spouse, might engage in extramarital relationships. Instead, respondents focused on the infidelity of one or the other. As stated above, these views are strongly shaped by notions of how men and women should

¹⁵⁹Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

¹⁶⁰Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, Male, Kailali, 16/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Dang, 09/09/2014

¹⁶¹Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014

¹⁶²Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014

¹⁶³Key informant interview with civil society, Male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

behave and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that guide both men and women in all the researched districts. These norms also make it socially acceptable for a man to have more than one wife, even though this is illegal in Nepal whereas women who are separated from their husbands or are widows are looked down upon by society.

Migrant infidelity was seen to take place for three main reasons: opportunity, falling into bad habits and sexual desire. Some respondents highlighted that infidelity was difficult in Gulf countries.¹⁶⁴ It was impossible with Arab women and only possible with other migrants. However, in India, Singapore and Malaysia there was much more opportunity, particularly Malaysia *“because it is a free country.”*¹⁶⁵ In these countries prostitution was said to be easier to access.¹⁶⁶ Migrants and non-migrants both commented that when easy access to prostitution was combined with easy access to gambling and alcohol, it increased the likelihood of infidelity. Infidelity was also thought to be more likely when a migrant was away from home for a long period of time¹⁶⁷ because *“if you are working abroad for many years then you will definitely have a desire for sex.”*¹⁶⁸ While no migrants personally admitted to engaging in such behaviour, they invariably seemed to know another migrant who had. The closest a respondent came to an admission was this: *“I did not actually go to that place [red light district] because I had my brother-in-law with me.”*¹⁶⁹ Overall, there were no direct admissions about infidelity and only two involving female migrants. Within the discussions it seemed to be accepted by both men and women that male migrants would engage in extra marital relationships while abroad and this was indicated by the way they spoke and accompanying laughter. Indeed, one civil society member stated, *“it is not awkward for the man; the society accepts it if my husband has had any relationships with anyone.”*¹⁷⁰ The same level of acceptability was however not present for women migrants as they were looked down upon and thought to have slept with or been coerced to sleep with their employers, employers’ relatives and friends and/or engage in prostitution.

When discussing the infidelity of migrants’ spouses the conversation changed. Some were content to make a simple claim that while *“[the] husband works hard to earn money abroad... [the] wife does not save that money and has extramarital affairs.”*¹⁷¹ Indeed, female respondents, mostly female community members, made this type of claim more often than males and stated that it was the wives of migrants having affairs.¹⁷² These claims are not

¹⁶⁴ Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014

¹⁶⁵ Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014

¹⁶⁶ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014,

¹⁶⁷ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁶⁸ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁶⁹ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁷⁰ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

¹⁷¹ Group discussion with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

¹⁷² Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants,

uncommon as within the broader Nepali context patriarchal values and practices are reinforced by female family members, particularly mothers, grandmothers and mother-in-laws.¹⁷³

When respondents went into greater detail they examined the reasons they thought were behind the infidelity of migrants' wives. The most basic reason was sexual desire. In the same way that migrants had affairs to fulfil sexual desire, so did their wives.¹⁷⁴ This seemed more common in situations where the husband had left the country soon after marriage¹⁷⁵ and when they were absent for longer periods of time.¹⁷⁶ Another reason given was financial. When husbands, for whatever reason, do not send sufficient remittances home it puts women in a more vulnerable position and they may engage in extramarital affairs as a means of support.¹⁷⁷ Cases of infidelity by a migrants' wife are thought to be more likely when they live outside the extended family home.¹⁷⁸

The existence of these risk factors meant it was widely accepted that infidelity was taking place and some concrete examples were provided such as verbal reports from local organisations working with women,¹⁷⁹ immediate neighbours¹⁸⁰ and family.¹⁸¹ Often, these cases are discussed with an outrage that is not evident when discussing male migrants' infidelity. Respondents seemed to pity male migrant workers 'toiling' away abroad and sending money home;¹⁸² *"the poor man is putting in so much effort and when he comes back it is all for nothing."*¹⁸³ These attitudes are particularly concerning because they show how gendered notions of men and women often victimise women who are already in a vulnerable position and reinforce the view of men as saviours of the family and the community.

Discussions on infidelity, particularly the perceived infidelity of the wives of migrant workers, demonstrated a level of recognition that rumour and gossip play a significant role in framing how the wives of migrant workers are viewed. Several comments were made about the difficulties this causes for women. As previously highlighted, the families of migrants experience specific economic problems associated with migration. Women associated with

female, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Kailali, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

¹⁷³ Saferworld (2014), 'How can you be a *marda* if you beat your wife?' Notions of masculinities and violence in Eastern Nepal.

¹⁷⁴ Group interview with community member, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014

¹⁷⁵ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

¹⁷⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

¹⁷⁷ Group interview with community members, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

¹⁷⁸ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

¹⁷⁹ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

¹⁸⁰ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

¹⁸¹ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 19/09/2014

¹⁸² Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

¹⁸³ Group interview with migrants, males, Dang, 19/09/2014

migrants face a number of additional challenges (this issue will be discussed in more detail in section 5.i). It is, therefore, not unusual for women to seek assistance when needed. However, when a wife approaches another man for help, or just talks to another man in the absence of her husband, this is viewed with suspicion by the community.¹⁸⁴

Male migrants can be very suspicious of their wives when they are abroad to the extent that some of them forbid their wives from using social media and ask friends to check up on them.¹⁸⁵ This level of suspicion may be related to financial matters or there may be other reasons for it, but often it is because the migrant has heard about another migrants' wife eloping so he becomes suspicious of his own wife¹⁸⁶ or they are directly informed that their wife is having an affair.¹⁸⁷ In these cases, the husband will very often call *"from abroad and at the same time, if his wife's mobile is busy then husband will have conviction that she is having an affair."*¹⁸⁸

Some men however recognise that much of what they hear about infidelity is just rumour and gossip but they also acknowledge that these types of rumours can be damaging and that the rumours do not quickly disappear. However, once *"misunderstanding, mistrust and suspicion [is] aroused"*¹⁸⁹ it is enough to cause significant problems between husband and wife. Although there are examples of infidelity happening, the majority of respondents believed that most allegations were just rumours.¹⁹⁰ There appears to be a general consensus that most of what is heard is simply rumours although there are a few actual cases.

iii. The impact of migration on family members: children, parents and elderly

The absence of one or more members of the family impacts on other family members beyond the spouse. For children, the migration of one of their parents can be a difficult time.

One of the key reasons for migration is to improve a family's living standard and this is often demonstrated by an investment in children's schooling, usually through matriculation at a boarding or private school. In general this was viewed as a positive impact of migration with only a few respondents challenging this view. Those who did not share this view stated that the quality of boarding or private schools is no higher than government schools and does not, therefore, improve the quality of education.¹⁹¹ This was, however, a minority view and it was

¹⁸⁴ Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁸⁵ Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 19/09/2014

¹⁸⁶ Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 19/09/2014

¹⁸⁷ Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁸⁸ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

¹⁸⁹ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

¹⁹⁰ Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Dang, 08/09/2014

¹⁹¹ Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

generally agreed that migration benefitted children through the quality of education they received by moving to a better school.¹⁹²

However, many respondents differentiated between schooling and education, highlighting that school only provides so much and that parents play a significant role in the education children receive.¹⁹³ The importance of parental guidance was heavily emphasised. With one parent out of the home, most often the father, care of the children becomes more difficult. With the father absent, the mother's economic role in the household increases, as she takes on duties normally performed by the husband.¹⁹⁴ This can lead to problems with children who notice and question the absence of their father and miss him.¹⁹⁵ While this void can to some extent be filled by other family members, it can impact on relationships in the home. When migrants return it can take time for the family to readjust with tension evident between the father and the children.¹⁹⁶

The greatest problems are, however, while the migrant is away. With mothers now constrained in terms of the time they can give to their children¹⁹⁷ and fathers absent, children can lack guidance and are at risk of becoming vulnerable to negative influences.¹⁹⁸

Male respondents in particular felt that “*children do not obey their mothers.*”¹⁹⁹ This type of view is based on the premise that fathers dispense discipline more than mothers.²⁰⁰ This is not surprising as within the communities in Far and Mid-West Nepal the role of disciplining children (particularly sons) is seen as the father's role. Most child-related problems associated with the absence of a male parent were: associating with “*bad companions,*”²⁰¹ not studying or attending school,²⁰² bad manners,²⁰³ smoking²⁰⁴ and alcohol and drug taking.²⁰⁵ Respondents felt that boys engaged in problematic behaviour more than girls. But there were also specific issues for girls in the absence of positive guidance: “*now daughters are marrying in their early age themselves [love marriage]. Due to early age marriage, there will be tensions.*”²⁰⁶ When the father visits the family the children listen to him and behave, but as

¹⁹² Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁹³ Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

¹⁹⁴ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

¹⁹⁵ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014

¹⁹⁶ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

¹⁹⁷ Group discussion, civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Dang, 20/09/2014

¹⁹⁸ Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

¹⁹⁹ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

²⁰⁰ Group interview with community member, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁰¹ Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁰² Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²⁰³ Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁰⁴ Group interview, family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

²⁰⁵ Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

²⁰⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

soon as he returns abroad the children return to the previous behaviour.²⁰⁷ This type of behaviour was directly attributed to the absence of the father and should be viewed within the framework of the larger patriarchal system that exists in the Far and Mid-West communities.

The impact of migration can also be seen on the parents of migrants and elderly members of the family. Respondents who fell into these categories expressed concerns about migration: they worry about those abroad and worry about their care provision.

Economic conditions drive migration and while the parents of migrants understand this they also worry about the conditions they may face abroad.²⁰⁸ In addition to death or accident, parents also recognised and expressed apprehension about the hardships their children might encounter working abroad²⁰⁹ and were aware of the stories of migrants being cheated by manpower companies. These types of concerns, particularly among older people, seem to increase during festival seasons when migrants are missed even more and the elderly fear they may never see their children again.²¹⁰

The absence of migrants, and concern over their wellbeing, also gives rise to trepidation about the provision of care they may receive if anything happens to the migrant.²¹¹ This is particularly the case if there is only one son.²¹² Traditionally within the patriarchal social system, the son and his wife would take on the responsibility of caring for parents and the elderly. When the son is abroad the expectation is that the wife will care for his parents, however, problems arise if it is perceived that the daughter-in-law does not adequately care for them.²¹³ In these cases there is a perceived vulnerability of the parents who feel they “*have to keep quiet because they do not have any option. They have to listen to [their] daughter-in-law.*”²¹⁴ In Nepal, caring for parents and elderly family members is a very important role and there is a cultural obligation that this care will be provided.²¹⁵ However, in the same way that the care of children can suffer when the father is absent, the ability of the daughter-in-law to care for her in-laws or elderly family members is reduced because of her increased work load. In extended families there will usually be a number of people who assist with caring,²¹⁶ but as family structures change it might be the case that “*there will only be elderly people.*”²¹⁷ Changing family structures has led to a rise in homes for older people where elderly people live outside the family home.²¹⁸

²⁰⁷ Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁰⁸ Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014

²⁰⁹ Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²¹⁰ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

²¹¹ Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²¹² Key informant interview, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014; Group interview, family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

²¹³ Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

²¹⁴ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²¹⁵ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²¹⁶ Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²¹⁷ Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²¹⁸ Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

Beyond their own concerns, the parents of migrants and elderly family members acknowledged the increased burden placed on the daughter-in-law by the absence of her husband. It was understood by the migrants' family that they must rally round and support.²¹⁹ However it can be difficult for elderly family members to perform manual work.²²⁰ Although elderly family members are attempting to support the family, it can unwittingly increase the burden on the daughter-in-law who ends up worrying about her in-laws, as well as the other functions she has to perform.

5. The effects of migration on women associated with migrants

Migration impacts the families of migrants in a number of different ways. As already established, the majority of migrants are young males. Women associated with these men face a range of challenges, some of which have already been identified. What became apparent from interviewee responses was that the impact on the women associated with migrants was arguably the greatest.

i. The vulnerability of women associated with migrants

Women become increasingly vulnerable when their husbands migrate. Although initially they might be supportive of their migration, a number of factors combine to make this period very difficult.

One of the most significant issues raised was that of insecurity, particularly of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). SGBV takes place in a number of forms but it was generally accepted that "*migration has increased violence against women.*"²²¹ Many respondents talked about external security threats to the wives of migrants, in particular the threat to property and person. The responsibility of ensuring a households' security lies with the man so it is easy to see how insecurity may increase when they are away.²²² A significant fear for women who remain in the home is that they will be targeted by thieves who know there is no male in the house.²²³ However, worse than this is the threat, perceived and actual, of rape. While no respondents disclosed incidences of rape during the research, the perceived risk creates fear for women.²²⁴ Additionally, a number of respondents highlighted the lack of physical security

²¹⁹Group interview with family of migrants, male, Dang, 20/09/2014; Key informant interview with journalist, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²²⁰Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²²¹Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

²²²Key informant interview with journalist, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²²³Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²²⁴Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

for wives of migrants in the absence of their husband. The lack of physical security increases when a migrants' wife does not live with her in-laws.²²⁵

It might be expected that wives of migrants face external threats to security when the husband is away from the home, but what is unexpected is cases of rape from within the household with attempts being made by brother-in-laws and father-in-laws.²²⁶ This view was supported by a number of other respondents, both male and female and was based on articles they had read in newspapers.²²⁷ This insecurity, particularly from within the household, places a heavy burden on the wives of migrants which is further exacerbated because of tensions over remittances. If women do not receive the money they have very little power within the household and may become even more vulnerable. At the same time if they do receive the money they may be at risk from other people attempting to access the money.

An additional security risk faced by wives of migrants is from men who attempt to befriend them and begin relationships to gain access to the resources sent from abroad.²²⁸ This happens when men in the community target the wives of migrants.²²⁹ Female respondents feared being approached in this way.²³⁰ It was also reported that men will blackmail the woman by threatening to spread rumours about them having a sexual relationship. Given the level of rumours and suspicion about the wives of migrants (highlighted in section 4.ii) this type of threat is significant and for this reason women will often pay.²³¹

The wives of migrants are particularly susceptible to approaches from men while their husbands are away because of the increased burden they face. Women face enormous pressure to maintain the household, manage farming obligations and seek external employment if there is not enough money coming into the household. In order to manage all of these tasks some wives will seek outside assistance.²³²

The workload of women increases significantly when their husbands are abroad. Both men and women acknowledged the greater pressure women are under as a result of migration. Women are required to continue with household duties such as cooking, washing and cleaning,²³³ caring for the children²³⁴ and parents, and paying household bills as well as

²²⁵Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Dang, 20/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²²⁶Key informant interview with journalist, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²²⁷Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with police personnel, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

²²⁸Key informant interview with police personnel, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

²²⁹Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²³⁰Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

²³¹Key informant interview with police personnel, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

²³²Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²³³Group interview with community member, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²³⁴Group interview with community members, female, Dang, 20/09/2014

looking after cattle,²³⁵ tilling land²³⁶ and harvesting paddy fields.²³⁷ The “*workload increases significantly. A single person has to do the work of two.*”²³⁸ The level of burden on the wives of migrants depends on their family situation. If they reside outside the extended family they may hire labour to help them which reduces their ability to save remittance money. Although they have little choice, this also makes them more susceptible to rumour and gossip from within the community. Some wives received assistance from their family, older parents and children but this brings additional complications in terms of a parent’s health and children’s schooling. In other cases, villagers may help²³⁹ and the wives of migrants often support each other by taking it in turns to labour for each other. However, in some cases they do not get assistance from their family²⁴⁰ who do not support the migration process by assisting the wife. However, when the husband returns the “*community ends [its] suspicion over our behaviour and actions. They stop chatting behind our backs.*”²⁴¹

This increased burden can have health implications such as exhaustion, sickness, prolapsed uterus²⁴² and undernourishment, which is caused when the “*taking of food becomes irregular because of [the] increased workload.*”²⁴³ As well as health concerns relating to increased workloads, a number of respondents also raised fears over sexual health, particularly the risk of being infected with HIV by husbands who had engaged in extra marital relationships while abroad.²⁴⁴ According to some in civil society, this causes significant problems in the family as very often the husband does not inform his wife and she becomes infected.²⁴⁵ A social health professional reported that if a wife requests that her husband be tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) before engaging in unprotected sex the husband would become angry and accuse her of not trusting him;²⁴⁶ or if the wife wished to engage in protected sex he would make allegations that she had been unfaithful so to avoid this, the wife is forced to comply with what her husband wants.²⁴⁷ This issue also has social implications. It was reported that in one village unmarried girls are rejecting migrants because of fears around HIV, preferring instead to “*marry the boys who live in the village and have not gone for foreign employment because they feel insecure about whether the migrant is HIV infected.*”²⁴⁸ This observation requires additional research but the development of these preferences

²³⁵ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²³⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²³⁷ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²³⁸ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²³⁹ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

²⁴⁰ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²⁴¹ Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Dang, 08/09/2014

²⁴² Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

²⁴³ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁴⁴ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Key informant interview with journalist, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, mixed, Kailali, 09/09/2014

²⁴⁵ Group discussion with civil society, mixed, Kailali, 09/09/2014

²⁴⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

²⁴⁷ Key informant interview with journalist, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²⁴⁸ Group interview with community members, female, Kailali, 19/09/2014

among unmarried girls was partly attributed to the increased levels of health awareness in the communities.

Although the vulnerability of women associated with migrants increases, it doesn't always mean that their efforts to take on additional responsibilities within the household are recognised by the community. Their engagement and participation in village development activities and Village Development Committee (VDC) meetings as a representative of the family is interpreted as the absence of the member of a household.²⁴⁹ The good things wives are doing are often not seen and they are accused of being lazy.²⁵⁰

These types of accusations represent an element of the rumour that the wives of migrants have to endure at the hands of the community.²⁵¹ The community focuses on the negatives and if one woman does something wrong then the community comes to think that all wives of migrants are the same.²⁵² While the wives of migrants are managing the increased workloads and dealing with their own feelings about their absent husband, they are also forced to overcome community pressures - often without the support of their own family.²⁵³

Most of the rumours and suspicion about the wives of migrants related to infidelity. As previously stated, in the absence of her husband, women are often required to seek support from other people. Sometimes this support comes from other men and this is not well received by the community.²⁵⁴ Their behaviour and activities are scrutinised and judged by the family and society.²⁵⁵

This view was reinforced by assertions that other men in the family are required to provide guidance to the migrants' wife in their absence to ensure she does not engage in bad behaviour²⁵⁶ or follow what was considered a socially unacceptable course due to her "*basic needs*."²⁵⁷ These views about women stem from the patriarchal structure of Nepali society,²⁵⁸ which the wives of migrants are very aware of. To avoid getting into too many difficulties within their community the wives will moderate their behaviour. This act demonstrates the

²⁴⁹Key informant interview with journalist, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²⁵⁰Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

²⁵¹Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

²⁵²Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

²⁵³Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Dang, 08/09/2014

²⁵⁴Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

²⁵⁵Key informant interview with manpower agent, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁵⁶Group discussion with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²⁵⁷Group interview with community member, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁵⁸Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

level of inequity in society.²⁵⁹ Overall, women associated with migrants can face a significantly increased vulnerability as a result of their husband's migration.²⁶⁰

ii. The empowerment of women associated with migrants

Migration has undoubtedly increased the burden on women and the vulnerability of women associated with migrants but it has also opened up space for women. Some civil society members argue that the migration of men has empowered women, but this is not a view which is shared by all and needs to be balanced against the increased burden they face.²⁶¹

Much of the argument around empowerment is based on the work women are doing in the household. With women taking on the tasks usually performed by men,²⁶² there has been a broadening of gender roles²⁶³ and women are becoming heads of households.²⁶⁴ Wives are now required to manage family business while engaging with the VDC office.²⁶⁵ They play a greater role in household decision-making out of necessity.²⁶⁶ While they may sometimes consult their husbands and there may be disputes over decision-making,²⁶⁷ on the whole this has increased the capacity of migrants' wives and lead to positive developments in the family and community.²⁶⁸

Women are now going out of the home and widening their experiences in order to meet the needs of their family. Whereas *"when their husband was here they could not go out [of the home], nowadays they go out, they are [more] aware about themselves, they know many things."*²⁶⁹ Society's changing perception of women who go out of the house means that more women are utilising remittance money to begin small businesses such as tea stalls, groceries and small shops. They are driven to do this out of economic necessity and are encouraged by their husbands.²⁷⁰

The increasing role of women in the household and their greater involvement in the family's economic affairs led, in some cases, to their empowerment. As well as this, women became noticeably more present at community functions. The involvement of migrants' wives in village-level groups was vital for communities heavily affected by male migration. Wives of migrants have also become involved in market management, community sanitisation projects,

²⁵⁹ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²⁶⁰ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

²⁶¹ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

²⁶² Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁶³ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²⁶⁴ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁶⁵ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

²⁶⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁶⁷ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁶⁸ Key informant interview with local government, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁶⁹ Key informant interview with police personnel, Dang, 18/09/2014

²⁷⁰ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

running businesses in the community and representing the community.²⁷¹ It is reported that this enhances the capacity of the women involved and benefits the community.²⁷² However, this type of involvement in the community is not always well received and can lead to questions about the wives' character from her husband or community.²⁷³ She may be accused of acting like a politician or leader²⁷⁴ and is chastised and held back. A general perception among all respondents was that only with the support of her family can a woman become truly empowered.

When women are supported by their families and the wives of migrants are able to take advantage of the opportunities that have opened up in the absence of their husbands, their confidence increases. They have greater awareness and more self-belief in their ability to make decisions and run the household and businesses effectively. However, this is not always valued. There continues to be resistance to the empowerment of women in society and the rumours faced by migrants' wives can be stronger when they are pitted against successful women. Society tends to focus on those who are in a vulnerable position – particularly the wives of migrants. Society fabricates an overly negative and critical image of them because they are easy targets, as women who are vulnerable in the absence of their husbands.²⁷⁵ This reiterates the need for wives of migrants to have the support of their husband and family in order to succeed in his absence with minimal community pressure. However, when husbands return to the household this can be a challenge, as they may seek to revert back to how things used to be in terms of power and decision-making;²⁷⁶ for most women the change in head of household is only temporary while the husband is away.²⁷⁷

6. Community implications of migration

The previous sections have all contributed to an understanding of the community implications of migration to some degree, in particular sections four and five which consider family disintegration, infidelity and the vulnerability of women associated with migrants. This section takes a closer look at how the community views migration and migrants, both prior to and after migration.

i. The community's outlook on migration and treatment of migrants

Section one gave an indication of the community's understanding of why migration takes place. It detailed the problems families face that lead to the decision to migrate and offers support for these decisions. This support is what enables migration to take place. As

²⁷¹Group interview, family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

²⁷² Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁷³Key informant interview with journalist, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

²⁷⁴ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁷⁵Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁷⁶Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

²⁷⁷Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

highlighted previously, the economic situation of potential migrants is very precarious. They are financially poor and struggle to access loans because of their low financial status. It is their difficult economic situation that leads to the decision to migrate. In this case those who wish to migrate often approach family and members of the community for support in raising the necessary finance. Often wealthier people in the community will provide a loan with interest.²⁷⁸ The same people also provide loans to migrants while they are abroad in case of emergencies such as health issues. However, the provision of these loans is often based on economic class with middle-income people finding it easier to access loans²⁷⁹ compared to those from a lower socioeconomic class. This directs the destination of migration with those from a lower socioeconomic class tending to go to India where migration costs are much lower. The provision of loans from community members should be seen more as a business venture than support for migration, it is, nonetheless, clear that the provision of these types of loans influences patterns of migration.

The community expressed concern about the high levels of migration taking place and the lack of youth in the villages. This was highlighted in section 3.1 when discussing agricultural needs but the issue is also relevant for other areas of social life such as taking people to hospital when they are sick²⁸⁰ which places an additional burden on the community and reduces support for migration. The way that the community is reported to treat women associated with migrants when their husbands are abroad, could imply that the community is not supportive of migration. Their treatment of these women makes it harder for migrants to be away from home. This was one way of viewing the level of community support for migration but there are other dimensions to a community's outlook.

Support for migration is also based on how a migrant and their family are treated upon the migrant's return. The way in which a migrant and their family are regarded is almost solely based on how well (financially) they are perceived to have done as a result of migration. These perceptions will start to form while the migrant is away and cannot always be predicted. For instance, if a migrant is regularly sending money home to his family that family may be well regarded in the community but equally this may lead to social jealousy,²⁸¹ particularly from other migrant families who are not receiving good amounts of remittance. This can lead to community tensions. However, if migrants do not send remittances home, for whatever reason, they are judged negatively by the community.²⁸²

Community judgement continues after the migrant has returned to Nepal. While many respondents indicated that earning the respect of the community depends on how well the migrant has done financially,²⁸³ it is also linked to how he behaves when he returns. If his

²⁷⁸Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²⁷⁹Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

²⁸⁰Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁸¹Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

²⁸²Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

²⁸³Key informant interview with civil society female, Kailali, 16/09/2014; Key informant interview with manpower agent, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali,

character is good and he has saved money, he will be respected²⁸⁴ but if he acts as though he is superior then it will cause problems in the community.²⁸⁵

What also matters is how the money is earned and what is done with it. Beyond the expectation and judgement on how families of migrants spend remittances, there is also an expectation in the community that migrants will help by providing loans. Many migrants will assist others in the community and this helps strengthen community relations.²⁸⁶ However not all migrants will do this; some prefer to focus on supporting their own family and this can be perceived negatively.²⁸⁷ Another expectation relates to the way in which migrants perceive the community to judge them. As previously established, many people refuse to do menial work in Nepal because they will not be respected in the community. Instead they opt to migrate but very often end up doing similar jobs. This can lead to the migrant earning less than expected and becoming reticent about the money he has earned and the job he performed. In some cases this leads to the migrant becoming reluctant to participate actively within the community for fear of judgement or criticism about the work undertaken or money earned.²⁸⁸

Arguably the most significant issue in terms of the community's outlook on migration was the difference in perception between male and female migrants. This has provided more detail about how women associated with migrants are treated. Overwhelmingly respondents emphasised societal norms regarding gender differences and what was deemed appropriate, with most respondents indicating that women should not migrate.

One of the key issues associated with women choosing to migrate was the permission that is often required. Often society's gender expectations in which "*women are confined within the kitchen and are not permitted to go out,*"²⁸⁹ makes it very difficult for women to migrate. There is strong social pressure against this. Allegations about what women do when abroad and the possible threat of SGBV make it difficult for some families to support the idea – even those who are more open to it. Some manpower agents actively refuse to process migration applications from women citing problems with their family who do not want them to go.²⁹⁰ Perceptions about women migrating for work are gradually changing as perspectives broaden but it will take time. Even when husbands are open to the idea of female migration they feel compelled to discourage their wives because of the pressure to conform to traditional notions

17/09/2014; Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

²⁸⁴ Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

²⁸⁵ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

²⁸⁶ Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

²⁸⁷ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

²⁸⁸ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

²⁸⁹ Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁹⁰ Key informant interview with manpower agent, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

about how women should behave.²⁹¹ However, when a female migrant has consulted with her husband and in-laws and her decision to migrate has been accepted it seems that they do not encounter any problems with their family, particularly their husband.²⁹²

When a female migrant returns to Nepal she is generally met with negative perceptions.²⁹³ Returning male migrants are, on the whole, treated with respect, but female migrants do not enjoy the same level of societal respect.²⁹⁴ The cause of this appears to be the same for female migrants as it is for the wives of migrants and stems from suspicions about their behaviour and activities. These suspicions are shaped by social expectations of how men and women should behave. There is a significant amount of distrust towards female migrants, their character is questioned and they become the subject of rumours and are accused of infidelity and prostitution.²⁹⁵ Even those who are supported by their family are not “*seen in positive ways by the society*.”²⁹⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, it was stated that most of these allegations came from women in the community, not men.²⁹⁷

Society’s response towards female migrants depends on their views about the nature of their employment when abroad. Most migrating women are employed as domestic workers and, as with previous assertions that menial work is not respected in Nepal, this is “*deemed in a negative light. They are undervalued*.”²⁹⁸ Regardless of how well the female migrant may have done “*men migrants’ work and actions are praised while that of women is condemned*.”²⁹⁹ Their work will not be viewed as worthy³⁰⁰ as culturally women are not viewed as providers for the family or as an income-earning family member.³⁰¹ A successful female migrant who returns with good earnings, would still face accusations of prostitution.³⁰² These views seem to be based on social constructions of gender roles. Women seeking to migrate for employment must either consult with the family or experience greater difficulty when they return, as they may not be fully accepted by their family or community. This is made more difficult by accepted gender roles where the husband is expected to

²⁹¹ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

²⁹² Key informant interview with civil society, Dang, 19/09/2014

²⁹³ Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

²⁹⁴ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 22/09/2014

²⁹⁵ Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014; Key informant interview with journalist male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group interview with family migrants, female, Dang, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Dang 17/09/2014

²⁹⁶ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

²⁹⁷ Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 19/09/2014

²⁹⁸ Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

²⁹⁹ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁰⁰ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 18/09/2014

³⁰¹ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

³⁰² Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with police personnel, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

provide while the wife looks after the household. When the wife migrates this can lower the husband's social status in the eyes of the community³⁰³ as he is seen as being unable to provide for his family.³⁰⁴ This can result in increased family tension which, when coupled with a rejection of female migrants by the community, can cause significant problems.

With persistent opposition to female migration it can “*be very difficult for women to rehabilitate and reconcile in the family and society.*”³⁰⁵ In some cases the pressure this puts on the spousal relationship³⁰⁶ can cause family breakdowns or separation from the extended family.³⁰⁷ As discussed previously in this report, for some unmarried female migrants it can be problematic for them to find husbands because of suspicions about how she earned the money. This suspicion reinforces patriarchal traditions and helps perpetuate GBV.³⁰⁸

ii. The impact of migration on status in the community

Financial issues overwhelmingly drive the decision to migrate and it is, therefore, not surprising that money plays a big part in the status of returning migrants. For many Nepalis, social status is shaped by wealth and so migrants are often judged on how successful they have been in their employment abroad. Changes in status brought about by money are defined by the utilisation of remittances.³⁰⁹ People in the community recognise the importance of money in enabling people to look after their family³¹⁰ so while the community may not view migration positively, they respect the returned migrant.³¹¹ This is especially the case when migrants utilise their remittance productively and contribute to the economy as this has derivative benefits for the community.³¹² Furthermore, when the community sees a change in the migrant as a result of their exposure to different environments and advanced technologies they view the returned migrant more positively.³¹³ However, this change in attitude was mostly reserved for male migrants; returning female migrants who showed any change in her appearance or personality were viewed negatively for failing to conform to social norms.

The level of respect and prestige that is bestowed on a migrant is also largely determined by which country they migrated to. There exists a hierarchy in which migration to the West (Europe, United States of America and Australia) is at the top as it is seen as the best, with

³⁰³ Group interview with family of migrant, male, Dang, 20/09/2014

³⁰⁴ Group discussion with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁰⁵ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁰⁶ Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

³⁰⁷ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

³⁰⁸ Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

³⁰⁹ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³¹⁰ Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³¹¹ Group interview with family of migrant, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³¹² Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

³¹³ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

the Gulf countries and Malaysia next³¹⁴ and migration to India at the bottom.³¹⁵ This hierarchy is defined by earning potential.³¹⁶ In principle all migrants will be better respected if they utilise their earnings well, however, greater respect was reserved for those who migrated to ‘better countries’ such as Australia, European countries and the USA. This can sometimes cause problems as migrants may be judged and treated differently by the community.

Increased wealth as a result of migration can change a migrants’ status in the community in another way. Caste-based discrimination has long been a social issue in Nepal and in recent years there have been efforts to address it. When marginalised (usually Dalit and Tharu) people migrate and do well, their social status can increase and discrimination is reduced.³¹⁷ To a certain degree, a Dalit’s standing within the community is dependent on the way s/he behaves and converses with people.³¹⁸ If a Dalit migrant has done well then he will be accepted in the community and will receive greater respect than those doing less well (but belonging to other social caste groups that are higher in the social hierarchy) because “*money is the main thing that matters in the caste system...if a Dalit earns a lot, even the Brahmins [will] marry them here.*”³¹⁹ This is also the case for other migrants belonging to marginalised caste groups, such as Tharus,³²⁰ who can be ‘upgraded’ to higher castes.³²¹ These comments indicate that views on what shapes the caste system are changing. Before, views about caste were shaped by social class and labour based distinction but now it appears to be shaped by economic wellbeing.

As with caste-based discrimination, gender-based based discrimination is endemic in Nepal. Although the overwhelming response from the community towards female migrants has been negative, there are instances where patriarchal attitudes, held by women as well as men, are changing and female migrants are more accepted upon their return. In general a male migrant will always be better regarded than a female “*but it also depends on someone’s capacity. If the woman is well educated then they respect her. It depends on her capability.*”³²² There is increased acceptance that women should be able to migrate, that migration increases the capacity of women and enables them to earn good money.³²³ There is also growing awareness that not all female migrants behave inappropriately or engage in extra marital relationships. However at the same time, there is still a prevailing attitude towards successful female migrants that they earned their money through prostitution, even when it is untrue and there is

³¹⁴ Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

³¹⁵ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

³¹⁶ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

³¹⁷ Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

³¹⁸ Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

³¹⁹ Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

³²⁰ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

³²¹ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

³²² Group interview with community members, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

³²³ Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

no evidence to support these sorts of discriminatory attitudes.³²⁴ There is evidence however that this view is slowly changing: “*earlier the attitude towards female migrant workers was negative but these days a lot of people are going and the trend has altered the understanding.*”³²⁵ As more women migrate, society is beginning to look at the ways remittances are utilised. When this is done well those women gain the respect of the community and this has supported the gradual change in how society perceives women that work outside of home: “*people think if those women can work abroad then why can’t they do it in Nepal.*”³²⁶

It is clear that migration can lead to a decrease in the social status of a female migrant because she loses society’s trust for the reasons explained above.³²⁷ But there were also some examples where women have been able to earn the trust of the community through effective utilisation of remittance money, thereby gaining higher status in the community as a result of migration. There were examples of this happening for both female migrants and women associated with migrants.³²⁸ This was mostly linked to how they utilised the remittance money which was usually found to be invested in land, a house or in small-scale agricultural enterprises.

Overall the status of migrants and families of migrants within society can improve if they are judged to have worked well, earned good money, utilised it in the right way and behaved appropriately while abroad. On the other hand if a migrant is judged not to have done these things it can ruin the “*prestige, honour and respect of the family.*”³²⁹

iii. Cultural impacts of migration

A number of cultural implications of migration were identified by respondents. The most striking part of this was that men dominated the discussion of this topic with women in the three districts offering very little in the way of views or opinions.

Perhaps the most important cultural implication of migration relates to rituals and festivals. Many respondents expressed the view that migration had affected funeral rituals as many of the country’s youth are out of the country.³³⁰ This is particularly problematic as “*women do not attend [the] funeral here so at that time we have to call people. It will be difficult to find people during funerals.*”³³¹ The elderly appeared particularly concerned that with family members abroad it can delay performing funeral rituals, from a few days if migrants are in

³²⁴Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³²⁵Group interview with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

³²⁶Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³²⁷Group discussion with civil society, no gender provided, Dang, 09/09/2014

³²⁸Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³²⁹Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014

³³⁰Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

³³¹Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

India³³² to a number of years if they are further afield.³³³ This has prompted a change in some cultural practices: “*time has changed and women also go in death ceremony.*”³³⁴

As was the case with marriages, the negative effects of migration were also seen when exploring the cultural implications. Although the cost of a wedding was reduced due to migration as there were fewer people to invite,³³⁵ the lack of people, particularly youth, was felt in the energy of the event: “*there is not as much excitement as there used to be.*”³³⁶ For some households, those who had migrated did not return for major festivals, such as Dashain or Tihar, which caused distress amongst family members. Moreover, if an inadequate amount of money is sent which doesn’t cover the costs of these festivals it can have negative repercussions for the migrant and the family’s standing in the community.³³⁷ Festivals are a key part of Nepali cultural life and the gradually diminishing size of communities due to migration will continue to bring about incremental cultural change.³³⁸

A further way in which Nepali culture is reportedly affected by migration is through the influence of other cultures. One aspect that was raised was the change in lifestyles and the influence this can have on existing local culture. With increased wealth has come increased expenditure on material goods. Many respondents discussed the negative aspects of utilising remittances on non-productive areas i.e. goods and services that do not contribute to the economy. Others highlighted how the introduction of goods such as satellite television has reduced the importance of traditional culture.³³⁹ It is not only migrants and the families of migrants that have access to these types of products and services but when the families of migrants do not work it was felt they would just sit watching television.

The influence from outside cultures has led people to lead different lifestyles and changed the sorts of events that are celebrated. Birthdays, wedding anniversaries and valentine’s day were not historically celebrated but they are now.³⁴⁰ These things were not necessarily seen as negative or harmful because they bring benefits such as strengthening communal ties, however, the obligation to celebrate these sorts of events had implications for a family’s finances. For some respondents, these changes represent a shift towards Western culture to the detriment of Hindu culture and they also felt that migrant workers have embraced a Western lifestyle and brought it back to Nepal.³⁴¹ Some respondents believe that migration poses a threat to the religious culture of Nepal. These respondents expressed concern that

³³²Key informant interview with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 16/09/2014

³³³Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

³³⁴Key informant interview with local authority, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³³⁵Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

³³⁶Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

³³⁷Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³³⁸Key informant interview with local authority, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³³⁹Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

³⁴⁰Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Dang, 09/09/2014

³⁴¹Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

migrants might change their religion as a result of migration³⁴² and that if this continued it could result in religious conflict.³⁴³ It was, however, not clear why religious conversion was thought to be driven by migrants given the majority of migrants from Nepal are either in India or Muslim countries (Gulf countries and Malaysia).

One significant positive cultural change that is reported to have taken place as a result of migration is that of decreasing practice of caste-based discrimination. It has previously been stated that the way in which the community views those from so-called “lower castes” who have worked abroad is dependent on whether they are seen to have done well for themselves. However, changes can also be seen in the way returning migrants from higher castes relate more equally to those who are lower caste. These changes can have influences in the wider community when people are living in close proximity and sharing living quarters.³⁴⁴ While this positive change in behaviour seems to occur during migrants' time abroad, it is not clear if it continues to a significant degree in the community once the migrants have returned home. While migrants stated that they do not adhere to the caste-based system when they are abroad, it may be difficult to adopt the same approach when they return home because of societal pressure.³⁴⁵ This is not the same for all migrants but it is clear that the process of migration can have a limited influence in fostering culture change. With stronger enforcement of legislation that prevents caste-based discrimination and fosters social equality, changes which now are only temporary can become better sustained in Nepali communities.

Migration cannot change all aspects of culture, but the changes it can bring were often viewed negatively by communities during the research. What was clear from migrants' responses was that their cultural perception changed as a result of migration: “*since you learn new things, it will help to fight against the social stigmas.*”³⁴⁶ The degree to which this newfound knowledge influences culture will differ from family to family and community to community.

7. The Government and migration

The Government and its relationship to migration was discussed in detail during the research. Most respondents complained that the Government was both the reason for migration and unable to effectively regulate migration and support migrants. However, criticism of the Government was not reserved only for matters associated with migration many of the responses indicate a wider problem in the relationship between the Government and its citizens.

³⁴²Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁴³Key informant interview with journalist, male, Dang, 18/09/2014

³⁴⁴Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁴⁵Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014

³⁴⁶Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

i. The Government in the pre-migration period

In terms of migration, the most discussed issue was the lack of an environment conducive to good employment within Nepal. The Government was blamed for the overall situation in the country that has led to migration and dissatisfaction with the Government.³⁴⁷ The lack of social security and lack of investment in human security was seen as a driver of migration. This has, in turn, increased socio cultural deterioration, which is viewed as a negative phenomenon.³⁴⁸

The Government's most significant shortcoming was perceived to be the lack of employment opportunities. Economic insecurity was stated as the primary reason for migration; all respondents cited Government failure to generate employment as central to the decision to migrate abroad.³⁴⁹ This view was held by almost all respondents and indicates the level of expectation citizens have of their Government. Whilst providing employment for every citizen is perhaps an unrealistic expectation,³⁵⁰ there are important areas that the Government can try and change in its economic policies. However the Government is not regarded as effective. For example, the system of nepotism and favouritism was seen to limit employment opportunities³⁵¹ but this issue is not being addressed by the Government. Likewise, industrial and employment policy is the preserve of the Government and in the absence of large-scale industry people are leaving the country.³⁵² Furthermore, poor utilisation of natural resources and the absence of an effective youth policy were seen as instrumental in increasing migration.³⁵³

The issue of youth migration and links to unemployment was also raised by those condemning the Government.³⁵⁴ These respondents talked about youth losing trust in the Government because the Government has failed to support them.³⁵⁵

There is strong criticism of the Government for not providing an environment conducive to employment. It is clear that more could be done by the Government in this regard however as remittances are a vital component of the economy and are "*expected to amount to over 30%*

³⁴⁷Key informant interview with police personnel, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

³⁴⁸Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

³⁴⁹Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014; Key informant interview with manpower agent, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

³⁵⁰Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

³⁵¹Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

³⁵²Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁵³Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁵⁴Group discussion with community members, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

³⁵⁵Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2014; Group discussion with community members, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

of GDP [Gross Domestic Product]”³⁵⁶ in the financial year 2014/15. Although migration is likely to remain high in Nepal for the foreseeable future, respondents were critical of the Government’s lack of support for migrants prior to their migration. Some respondents referred to orientation programmes run by the Government in order to prepare migrants³⁵⁷ however the content of these orientations was not clear from the research. Respondents stated that orientation programmes currently being offered were insufficient³⁵⁸ and did not cover essential information such as what support would be available in the destination country.³⁵⁹ The issues of orientation and employment were linked by the assertion that much of the employment abroad was menial because migrant workers lacked the necessary skills to do higher level work. It was suggested that the Government should have provided skills training to those migrating so they could engage in better types of employment and receive better salaries.³⁶⁰ The expectations expressed by some of the respondents also seemed unrealistic. However it is these types of expectations that are framing the relationship between the Government and its citizens - particularly the expectations of migrants.

ii. The Government, migrants and families of migrants

It is clear that from examining the responses the relationship between the Government, migrants and families of migrants is complicated. It is important to point out that these views came from migrants, families of migrants, community members and civil society; only one government official was interviewed.

The overwhelming issue raised in discussing the relationship with the Government was the problems migrants faced abroad. Many of the problems migrants experienced required support from embassy services however many respondents were very vocal about the lack of support they received from the embassy.³⁶¹ Complaints concerned embassy officials only speaking in English;³⁶² not supporting female migrants who had been victims of sexual violence;³⁶³ not doing enough to repatriate injured or deceased migrants quickly;³⁶⁴ and not supporting migrants who had been cheated by manpower companies.³⁶⁵ Nepal’s embassies were viewed as being very weak, especially when compared to the embassies of other

³⁵⁶World Bank (2014), *Nepal Economic Update*, Washington D.C; World Bank, April 2014

³⁵⁷Key informant interview with local government, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁵⁸Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁵⁹Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

³⁶⁰Group interview with community members, male, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

³⁶¹Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 17/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

³⁶²Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁶³Group discussion with civil society, male and female, Dang, 09/09/2016; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁶⁴Group discussion with civil society, mixed group, Kailali, 09/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁶⁵Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

countries providing migrant workers such as Malaysia,³⁶⁶ Vietnam³⁶⁷ and the Philippines.³⁶⁸ This led to migrants having a poor impression of their Embassy and Consular services.³⁶⁹

Along with potential examples of corruption, there are other reasons why there appears to be a gap between what migrants expect from the Government while they are abroad and what services they receive. Considering the volume of migration it is evident that the Government's capacity to manage the migration process is limited.³⁷⁰ Their ability to manage the process is further restricted by the number of different migration routes. When migration is direct from Nepal to the West, the Gulf countries or Malaysia, the Government can monitor it and knows who is out of the country and where they are. This makes it easier for them to support those migrants. However, a large amount of migration is either to India or to other countries via India. In these cases it is almost impossible for the Government to monitor migration. In some of these cases, manpower companies will take a migrant to India before issuing false documentation so they can travel on to countries that the Government has restricted travel to.³⁷¹

Another reason given for limited service provision for migrants while abroad was the lack of adequate ambassadors and officials making it difficult to carry out consular services. One particular issue was the alleged poor capacity in the Embassy as a result of understaffing.³⁷² If this was the case it would make it difficult for the Government to provide support services to migrant workers. It might also go some way to explaining the level of complaints from migrants. Generally there appeared to be a high level of dependency and expectation from citizens towards the Government.³⁷³ In terms of migration, what this means is that those wishing to migrate expect the Government to manage the process and support them while abroad.

The Government also has a relationship, of sorts, with the families of migrants who remain in Nepal while their family member is abroad. This relationship is partially determined by location with those in the city being more informed about government policies and actively engaged with the Government compared to those in rural areas.³⁷⁴ This relationship is necessary for all living in urban and rural areas; however for the families of migrants in rural areas there appears to be less of a relationship. This is perhaps due to the absence of the head of the household, when it is the husband who migrates. It may also be due to the increased workload of the migrants' wife who is now the temporary head of the household which prevents them from actively engaging with Government. The involvement of women in

³⁶⁶Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁶⁷Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁶⁸Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁶⁹Group interview with migrants, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

³⁷⁰Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

³⁷¹Key informant interview with local government, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁷²Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁷³Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

³⁷⁴Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

political and governmental aspects of life in the community is not impossible but is harder for them than it is for men. The lack of governmental coordination with migrant's families³⁷⁵ and political parties that are very powerful at the VDC level, show no interest in the problems families of migrants face.³⁷⁶ It is, therefore, understandable that the wives of migrants, burdened with an increased workload, do not engage significantly with local government.

Both the community and civil society were of the opinion that the VDC did little to support the families of migrants. The wives of migrants could not see the benefit of engaging³⁷⁷ and the VDC failed to proactively involve this group.³⁷⁸ However, it is not to say the families of migrants have no contact with the Government. Traditionally, most documentation – marriage registrations, birth certificates, citizenship certificates, death certificates and land titles – are issued by local government and require a male family member to process it. However, social changes accelerated by migration have seen the increased involvement of women in these processes. A marriage certificate still requires the husband to be present and this can present problems for newly married women trying to obtain a citizenship certificate for herself or a child after her new husband has migrated for employment.³⁷⁹ However, in general it is easier for the women to obtain certificates as the family members and community members can vouch for her and her child, provided the local Government authorities are convinced.³⁸⁰ In cases where the husband is away, it has also been made easier for the wife to buy land with remittances and receive the appropriate documentation.³⁸¹

In terms of voting, there has been an increase in the numbers of women becoming more politically involved,³⁸² while many of them base their political decision on their husbands voting patterns.³⁸³ Whilst the issue of voting is not technically part of the relationship between the Government and families of migrants, because women have the vote it brings them into contact with government mechanisms which means that in some ways a relationship exists between them.

The Government also has a relationship with migrants once they have returned from abroad. Respondents' views on the level of involvement returned migrants have in politics and their engagement with local government was split. Some felt that while returning migrants were aware of current political issues, they were disengaged and disinterested. Various

³⁷⁵Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁷⁶Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

³⁷⁷Key informant interview with civil society, female, Dang, 19/09/2014

³⁷⁸Group interview with community members, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁷⁹Key informant interview with journalist, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁸⁰Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with local government, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Dang, 20/09/2014

³⁸¹Key informant interview with local government, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁸²Key informant interview with local government, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁸³Group interview with community members, female, Kailali, 19/09/2014

technologies allow migrants to stay abreast of political developments while they are away.³⁸⁴ This is particularly the case for the youth who can be very cynical about the relevance of being politically engaged.³⁸⁵ The distance, perceived or actual, between politicians and the Government and the people is one of the main reasons for the disinterest of youth. This view is exacerbated by negative experiences with the Government when abroad³⁸⁶ to the point where many returning migrants do not involve themselves with local politics and government, preferring instead to get on with their own lives.³⁸⁷

Not all returned migrants felt this way however and some became actively engaged in local politics and government. Some returned migrants showed a particular interest in what is being done in relation to foreign employment; how it is being regulated and how families of migrants are being supported.³⁸⁸ These migrants become involved with local development activities and forestry user groups and “*try to give opinions and advice on local development based on their experiences.*”³⁸⁹ For some returning migrants their level of engagement within the community and its local governance and development is a direct result of their experiences abroad. Some have been politicised by the contacts they made,³⁹⁰ while others have become mobilised by seeing how things are done in other countries. This leads to them having increased demands and expectations from their Government.³⁹¹

Overall, although the Government does not experience direct hostility from migrants and families of migrants, they do not enjoy a particularly favourable relationship with these groups. The lack of support for migrants before, during and after migration and for migrants’ families while they are abroad has created a barrier between the Government and migrants which is not helped by society’s generally negative view of the Government.³⁹²

iii. Regulation of manpower agencies

The other significant relationship the Government has when it comes to migration is with manpower companies. This was a major issue for respondents who felt that manpower companies took advantage of migrants and that the Government did little to stop this.

One of the central roles the Government plays when it comes to migration is that of monitoring which falls into two categories: monitoring migration and monitoring the conduct of manpower companies. One challenge for the Government in monitoring manpower

³⁸⁴Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁸⁵Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁸⁶Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014; Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 20/09/2014

³⁸⁷Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

³⁸⁸Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁸⁹Group discussion with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 01/09/2014

³⁹⁰Group interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

³⁹¹Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 16/09/2014

³⁹²Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 16/09/2014

companies is that migrants do not always go through Government channels or they pass through India so there is limited data regarding migration.³⁹³ Respondents expressed concern over the inability of the Government to monitor the movement of migrants as this has implications for how the Government can support them. Currently, migrating Nepalis can only be monitored at airports³⁹⁴ - the Government does not check those crossing borders overland.³⁹⁵

The monitoring issue is compounded by a perceived weakness of the Government in how it deals with manpower companies. Many respondents emphasised the problems migrants have with manpower companies. Section 2.i discusses this in more detail. However, part of the reason manpower companies are able to manipulate migrants is because the Government does not effectively monitor their conduct.³⁹⁶ This is partly because of the number of manpower companies and agents in operation and there were a number of assertions that the Government does not focus on manpower related activity.³⁹⁷ The Department of Labour and other bodies relating to foreign employment, are centralised in Kathmandu and do not monitor agents in the districts.³⁹⁸ The Government is seen as weak as it cannot ensure that manpower companies provide the employment they have contracted migrant workers to do.³⁹⁹ There is also a belief that the Government should set the parameters within which manpower companies must work, and should introduce a minimum wage, which would stop the exploitation of Nepali migrant workers by third countries.⁴⁰⁰

However, a crucial issue was raised in relation to the apparent weakness of government to regulate manpower companies - the perception that some Government officials are engaged in corruption with manpower companies.⁴⁰¹ While this claim has not been substantiated, it was something that some migrants believe to be the case.⁴⁰² This view was also supported by civil society which has highlighted the role of embassy officials in brokering with manpower companies.⁴⁰³

³⁹³Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁹⁴Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

³⁹⁵Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014

³⁹⁶Group discussion with migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 19/09/2014

³⁹⁷Group interview with family of migrants, male Dang, 20/09/2014

³⁹⁸Key informant interview with civil society, male, Dang, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, female, Dang, 17/09/2014

³⁹⁹Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/09/2014; Group discussion with family of migrants, male, Dang, 08/09/2014; Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014

⁴⁰⁰Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

⁴⁰¹Group interview with community members, female, Kanchanpur, 21/09/2014; Group interview with family of migrants, male, Kailali, 19/09/2014

⁴⁰²Group interview with migrants, male, Dang, 19/09/2014; Key informant interview with migrants, male, Kailali, 18/09/2014

⁴⁰³Key informant interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014; Group interview with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

As a result of the perceived inadequacies of the Government, respondents have demanded that it take steps to effectively regulate manpower companies. This would help ensure the problems they, and their families face, are minimised and help improve the working and living conditions of migrants.⁴⁰⁴ Manpower companies should be effectively regulated by the Government to standardise migration costs and conditions.⁴⁰⁵ This would ensure that the Government controls migration and would also enable the country to gain economically from the system.⁴⁰⁶

Conclusion

Migration has become entrenched as a socio-economic practice in Nepal. Available statistics clearly show thousands of men and women leaving the country every day in search of employment opportunities. Despite the potential risk of being deceived by manpower agents and the perceived lack of support by the Government in creating local employment opportunities, people continue to travel abroad for work. Migrants are already in a vulnerable position and are forced to accept the changes in conditions placed upon them once abroad. Pressure from family members and their community to keep working and send money back home forces them to remain in situations or environments where they are vulnerable to deteriorating health, negative psychosocial impacts, isolation and financial debt.

Migration has significant consequences for the family as it is seen as a threat to existing family structures. Spouse relationships are negatively affected by long periods of separation and the lack of intimacy this causes. Existing patriarchal values and norms have had adverse impacts on women, as they are often subject to negative perceptions from their families and communities, most of which are linked to perceived infidelity. However, migration has also led to a gradual process of women becoming more empowered. In the absence of male household members, some women have had the opportunity to play a more active role in decision-making within their homes. For a few, this decision-making has also extended outside their homes, as they are compelled to interact with local government service providers and other local stakeholders on behalf of their household.

Finally, there were very high expectations of Government from local communities, migrants and their families who all identified the most significant shortcoming of the Government as its inability to create employment opportunities, forcing people to migrate for work. The perceived lack of support and limited service provision in foreign countries was a key reason for migrants and their families to have pessimistic views of the state. The other significant reason for negative views of the government was its inability to control and regulate manpower companies.

⁴⁰⁴Key informant interview with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 19/09/2014

⁴⁰⁵Group interview with migrants, male, Kanchanpur, 20/09/2014

⁴⁰⁶Group discussion with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 02/09/2014

Recommendations

Support the revision of existing policies to improve economic insecurities

A key dissatisfaction towards the Government was the lack of employment opportunities and economic insecurity. There is, therefore, an urgent need to revise existing economic development plans and policies to ensure that the local skilled and unskilled population are able to utilise their knowledge and experience for positive employment opportunities that contributes to their economic development and the country's economic progress. The project can support existing or establish links between the state and the private sector to facilitate the creation of innovative and realistic employment opportunities, particularly for youth and marginalised groups, in consultation with communities.

Support existing state and non-state mechanisms that provide skills development to outgoing migrants

The findings show that migratory practices- both seasonal and long-term- have become an on-going trend in Nepal. The project could support the practice by providing technical support to existing state mechanisms that provide skills and knowledge to outgoing migrants. The number of unskilled labour migrants is relatively high in rural communities. These migrants could benefit from this type of training to prepare them and help them avoid being placed in a vulnerable situation once they have arrived in their host country. This type of training should include knowledge on existing national and international labour laws and labour laws of the host countries, along with technical skills-based training.

Support and strengthen gender-sensitive trainings and knowledge development

Both men and women travel abroad for employment but migrant women are more vulnerable than men. Migrant women have reported various forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Existing support for outgoing migrants should be revised to ensure that the gendered needs and concerns of men and women from diverse socio-economic groups are addressed through training that target gender-specific needs. An example of gender-sensitive support could be to conduct a socio-economic mapping of young men and women to explore their levels of education and occupational skills and their gender-specific needs. This type of mapping could be used to inform and tailor the technical trainings and support they receive.

Establish and/or support psychosocial counselling mechanisms to help reintegration of returning migrants with their families

Migration causes long-term family separation, diminished intimacy between partners and increases mistrust between the migrant and his/her family members. In order to address this effectively, local level psychosocial counselling mechanisms could be established or existing mechanisms could be supported through the Sajhedari Bikaas project. While individual counselling for men and women migrants is important, it is equally important to include family counselling as part of the healing process for migrants and their families. Another

important aspect of psychosocial counselling is the support it can provide to returning migrants as a group; group counselling could be effective in providing a safety net for incoming and outgoing migrants who may benefit from jointly sharing common experiences in a trusted and safe environment.

Address the vulnerability of women associated with migrants in a gender-sensitive manner

Women are exposed to a number of external and internal threats, especially women whose husbands or other male family members have migrated. These women might be at increased risk of SGBV inside and outside their homes and have to cope with rumours of infidelity. Through a socially inclusive lens, Sajhedari Bikaas could provide assistance to these women by strengthening their economic independence and empowerment. It is imperative that existing programmes adopt a conflict-sensitive approach as often economic empowerment programmes targeting women only can lead to negative attitudes and/or backlash from other family members and the community due to existing power dynamics. This type of programming could be offered as part of a wider package to family members and coordinated with the technical trainings received by the migrant family member to ensure higher chances of community ownership.

Provide migrants and their families with long and short term finance/ investment support to better manage and use their remittances

One of the key issues of migration was the utilisation of migrants' remittances. While there are many families that are barely supported by the remittance earnings once the financial debt has been paid off, there were examples where earnings had been invested in small-scale businesses. This became something for other migrants and their families to aspire to; it resulted in increased social acceptance and respect from other community members. Providing migrants and their families with specific technical trainings to analyse market and labour needs, business management and innovative income generation could enable sound investment of migrant remittances. This would in turn contribute to sustainable income sources. These trainings should be informed by a socio-economic mapping at the local level and a market needs analysis at regional and national levels.

Annex: Methodology

Proposed research locations: Saferworld focussed on selected VDCs and/or Municipalities in three of the SajhedariBikaas districts that have the highest number of absentees (both in total numbers and proportional in relation to their overall population):

District	Total no. of absentees	% of district population
Kanchanpur	38,300	8.5
Kailali	62,500	8.1%
Dang	43,100	7.8%

The VDCs and/or Municipalities were selected during the desk research phase. One factor that was taken into consideration was the flood situation at the time of data collection which may have affected the selection of research sites.

Rationale

Migration within Nepal and to other countries, especially to India and the Gulf states, is a major phenomenon in Nepal. According to estimates by the Department of Foreign Employment, more than 1000 Nepalis leave the country every day to migrate for work to India and this tendency is rising.⁴⁰⁷ Most of those migrating are young working age men,⁴⁰⁸ although women are migrating as well.

With remittances being a major source of income for Nepal, a lot of studies have been carried out to understand the economic implications and benefits that external migration has on development in Nepal. At the same time, there is very limited research on the social implications migration has on the source communities, including the migrants' families.⁴⁰⁹ However, given the high number of people migrating it is to be expected that there will be significant implications that are both positive and negative. For example, previous research carried out by Saferworld⁴¹⁰ indicates that migration poses significant challenges to roles and relationships within families, often resulting in the breakdown of families or an increase in violence, especially domestic violence. There is also evidence that migration is both a necessity as well as a trend among young men, particularly in more remote villages. Young men from these areas see it as the only opportunity to earn money to sustain their families and also an opportunity to break out of every-day village routine.

⁴⁰⁷ DoFE (2011). Data on Foreign Labour Migration, www.dofe.gov.np

⁴⁰⁸ According to a study by the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management and IoM (2010), approx. one third of working age men have migrated abroad.

⁴⁰⁹ Studies seeking to assess the situation in Nepal include Jagannath Adhikari and Mary Hobley (2011), Everyone is leaving – who will sow our fields? The Effects of Migration from Khotang District to the Gulf and Malaysia; Chandra Bhadra (2013), The impact of Foreign Labour Migration to Enhance Economic Security and Address VAW among Nepali Women Migrant Workers and Responsiveness of Local Governance to Ensure Safe Migration; Tika Ram Gautam, Causes and Impact of Migration: A Sociological Study of Emigration From Kandeabash, Baglung, Nepal. Those studies focus on Kathmandu, Kaski, Sunsari, Baglung and Khotang districts.

⁴¹⁰ Saferworld (2014), How can you be a marda if you beat your wife? Notions of masculinities and violence in Eastern Nepal

Research objectives

Given the poor evidence base to date on the social implications of youth migration in general and in the Mid- and Far West in particular, the fifth conflict assessment sought to take an exploratory approach to gain an overview on three interlinked questions:

1. What are the implications migration has on interpersonal and family relationships?
2. What are the implications migration has on community relationships?
3. What are the implications of migration on relationships with the state⁴¹¹?

Under each of these broader headings the research focussed on specific aspects within these domains. The specific aspects were agreed upon after the completion of the first field research phase. Potential areas to focus on could, for example, include the link between migration and gender-based violence (GBV), the potential of migration to reduce or increase/create social tensions, or implications of migration on local decision making.

Important considerations

Members of the same community migrate both internally within Nepal as well as regionally or overseas and both seasonally and for longer periods of time. Therefore Saferworld did not only focus on one specific type of migration. It was, however, anticipated that the social implications for a family of a seasonal migrant who is only away for a number of months each year would be different to those whose family member is away for several years at a time. To capture these types of differences, the data were disaggregating to provide this level of detail.

The focus of the research was on the social effects migration has on community members and families, rather than on the migrants' experiences while away from their communities. Nevertheless, migrants were also involved in the research as key informants or group discussion participants as they were able to contribute important information on how migration is impacting on source communities and families.

Please note that the assessment was not able to assess the scale of migration from the selected SB districts; however, available statistics or estimates were considered in the desk research phase.

Methodology

Saferworld utilised the same methodological approach applied so far for the other conflict assessments to ensure consistency. However, to allow for both an exploration of social implications of migration on sending communities in the target districts as well as a more detailed assessment of specific aspects that are particularly relevant to the selected districts

⁴¹¹For this assessment, 'state' refers to aspects that include government institutions and government procedures; decision making and participation in the political discourse and procedures; views, perceptions and activism around political issues such as federalism, identity, gender equality and social inclusion, etc.

and SajhedariBikaas project's mandate, Saferworld divided the participatory consultation research stage into two phases.

Stage 1 – Desk Research, review of secondary data– to inform and complement the assessment, Saferworld conducted a review of secondary sources of information on external and internal migration, both focusing on Nepal and elsewhere. For this assessment, more focus was put on secondary data because of the wealth of data on migration in general and on economic implications of migration in Nepal.

Stage 2 – Participatory Consultations and Research – was the key stage in terms of data collection. This phase is rooted in a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach utilising tools crucial to ensure that the research was as participatory as possible given the various social and cultural factors that can be an obstacle to this. This phase mainly took place at the headquarters and VDC level in the three districts, where the research team collected most of the data informing the research. In addition, some interviews were carried out with key informants in Kathmandu, for example with representatives of NGOs or academics working on migration.

Participatory Research Techniques (PRTs) applied included the following:

Kathmandu, district and VDC-level key informant interviews (KIIs) are considered the core category of interviews to provide district specific information and qualitative data on perceptions of development initiatives and stakeholders. KIIs aimed to elicit information from target respondents who were strategically placed to speak on the topic.

Approximately 5-10 KIIs were conducted in each of the three target districts, plus 2-3 in Kathmandu. Interviewees were from government institutions, community based organisations, NGOs, INGOs, the media and others well-placed to talk about migration.

Where possible, additional in-depth interviews were carried out with individuals who had specific views on or experiences related to the social implications of migration for example spouses of migrants, their children or parents, or returnees themselves. These in-depth interviews provided a thick description of perceptions, experiences, attitudes and behaviour that added depth to the assessment.

Details on the key informants were agreed upon during the early research stages.

Group discussions (GDs) with community representatives in all three target districts were conducted. Three GDs were carried out which provided qualitative data on public perceptions of migration, migrants and the social effects migration has on communities. A combination of mixed and separate GDs (for example by gender, age group and whether or not participants had a migrant in their family) were carried out. Some PRT tools were used to gather in-depth information.

Details on the GD composition were agreed upon during the early research stages.

Data collection during the Participatory Consultations and Research stage took place in two phases:

Phase 1: Saferworld sought to get an initial and broader overview of the social implications of migration that existed at the community level, as defined and prescribed by research participants themselves rather than Saferworld staff, this helped to inform the more in-depth research during Phase 2. During this phase, Saferworld researchers and external note takers travelled to the three districts and carried out three GDs in each of the districts:

S. N	Group Discussions (GDs) – tentative	Quantity per district
1	Community members, including some members of migrants' families	1
1	Migrants who have returned to the communities	1
1	Representatives of organisations, institutions and other groups that work on or have expertise in migration.	1
	Total (3 districts)	9

Following the analysis of Phase 1 findings, Saferworld identified the key issues evident in each district and decided which aspects to look into in more detail during phase 2. The guiding questions and details for KIIs and GDs for Phase 2 were further developed and may have differed according to district findings in the 1st phase.

Phase 2: During Phase 2, the research teams carried out specifically tailored Group Interviews (GIs) and KIIs to get more in-depth information related to the key aspects selected during Phase 1. This was a more extensive and detailed examination of the issues.

Due to time constraints, Saferworld carried out the data collection during Phase 1 without local partners. However, local CeLRRd staff were part of the research teams during Phase 2- they observed, took notes and were part of the debriefings.

The research schedule was as follows:

Phase	Activities	Timeframe
Stage 1	Desk research and logistical preparations	From early/mid-August
Stage 2, Phase 1	Data collection in selected districts and	1 - 8 September

	VDCs Initial analysis of research findings and development of Phase 2 guiding questions	
Stage 2, Phase 2	Data collection in selected districts and VDCs	14-24 September
Stage 3	Analysis of findings and production of first draft Feedback incorporated	Mid December (because of Dashain and Tihar holidays) End of December

Research team

3 dedicated teams that were involved in the research, one in each district.

- 3 Saferworld staff members led on methodology development, training, data collection, analysis and write up and quality control;
- One external research advisor supported methodology development, desk research, field research for Phase 1, analysis and report writing;
- 3 external note takers for Phase 1;
- Up to 3 transcribers to transcribe research notes from KIIs and GIs;
- 3 local coordinators from respective research districts for Phase 2.

Three research teams comprising of a minimum of 2 members each were involved in the field research. A Saferworld staff member led each group. They received assistance from a research advisor who supported the development of the methodology, desk research, analysis and report writing and provided input for data collection in Phase 1. The assessment was supported by senior Saferworld staff in Kathmandu and London, particularly during methodology development, analysis of findings, reviewing the initial draft report and quality control. Local CeLRRd staff who participated in the recent conflict analysis training were involved in Phase 2 of this research.

Tentative Report Structure

The report is structured in the following way:

1. Introduction
 - Brief introduction to the Sajedhari Bikaas project, its objectives and the purpose of the conflict assessment
 - Brief summary of methodology used, brief outline of report structure
2. Executive summary of findings
3. Context background
4. Research findings

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings, Saferworld developed key themes and recommendations and identified priorities and opportunities for areas that the Sajhedari Bikaas project can engage in.

6. Annex

The annex includes:

- Final version of the methodology

Key principles

This research was guided by key principles underlying Saferworld's work.

Conflict and context sensitivity: Saferworld is committed to implementing the principles of conflict sensitivity in its own work and to support other actors to operate in a manner that is conflict-sensitive. Saferworld has applied the principle of conflict sensitivity throughout the methodology design, data collection, analysis and write-up. As part of this Saferworld has been transparent about the purpose of the research; involved respondents and researchers in a way that does not put them at risk; selected and designed questions in a way that would not increase tensions, fuel stereotypes, etc.; and ensured confidentiality and anonymity of respondents at all times.

Inclusivity: Inclusivity is fundamental to Saferworld's approach and the views and perceptions of the most vulnerable groups in society (which often includes women, youth, elderly and minorities) are a key consideration for Saferworld. While there are limitations in terms of how many representatives from vulnerable and marginalised groups can be involved, Saferworld aims to ensure a good understanding of the perceptions and specific concerns of these groups.

Gender balance: The research team talked to both male and female respondents from different age groups and strived to obtain nuanced viewpoints on the topic. However, the research team may not always have been able to get balanced involvement of male and female respondents. The team may also have had to prioritise respondents who were better informed about the relevant issues, even if fewer respondents from some groups were heard as a result.

Participatory methodology: The diverse views and perceptions of respondents are crucial to getting a good understanding of the current situation, potential developments and opportunities for programming responses. To get this information, participatory tools have proven effective as they are suitable for obtaining rich qualitative data. Saferworld has identified and employed a limited number of tools that are designed to extract good information on specific issues where appropriate.

Guiding Questions

These are proposed Guiding Questions for Phase 1 of the field research. Guiding Questions for Phase 2 were developed after the initial analysis of Phase 1 findings.

1. What are the implications migration has on interpersonal and family relationships?
 - What are the challenges in family or interpersonal relationships when a migrant is away and how are they dealt with?
 - After the migrant's return, how and in what way does migration positively/negatively alter family and interpersonal relationships? How is this dealt with?
 - Does migration empower/disempower the migrants' families, and if so, how?
 - What support systems is there/are not there to deal with any challenges or build on positive changes?
2. What are the implications migration has on community relationships?
 - To what extent and how do relationships with/within the community change because of migration (e.g., related factors including gender, age, caste, class/wealth/status, religion, etc.);
 - How do people view those changes? What do they think of it and why? (Probe based on gender, age, caste, status).
 - What are the positive social aspects of migration for the community? What are the negative social aspects of migration for the community?
 - What support systems exist to deal with challenges evident or build on migration related empowerment?
3. What are the implications of migration on relationships with the state?
 - What relationships do migrants maintain (or don't maintain) with the state while they are away? (for example, receiving services from the state, engagement in local decision making processes, voting etc.)
 - Do you think governance is affected as a result of migration? How and why?
 - After the migrant's return, how and in what way does migration positively/negatively alter relationships between the migrant and the state?
 - How does migration alter the relationship of migrants' families/the communities with the state?
 - Does migration empower/disempower the state, and if so, how?

Guiding questions for Phase 2 (based on initial analysis and observation of Phase 1 field data)

Economic issues affecting family/society

- 1) What are the economic benefits and challenges experienced by families who have a migrant abroad?

(Probe on: Debt issues and how managed, inability to pay rent, provision, school fees etc; poor use of money; investment in education/health care; improved skills; increased dependency on remittance).

2) How are educational/employment opportunities for migrants affected by migration?

(Probe on: Why drop education/employment for migration? Why do more men migrate for employment? What is the impact of limiting educational/employment opportunities? How can migration enhance education/employment opportunities?)

3) What are the social implications of changes in the labour force due to migration?

(Probe on: pressures on remaining family, intergenerational issues – children, youth, elderly, harvesting issues – Indian immigration, need to hire daily labour – rumours etc.).

Family and social relations

1) Are spousal relations affected by migration? If so, in what way?

(Probe on: mistrust based on rumours, trust over earnings, extra-marital affairs, divorce, GBV, missing family members and positive aspects).

2) Are intergenerational relations affected by migration? If so, in what way?

(Probe on: Spouse & In-law relations, issues between parent and child(ren) – role models, discipline etc., spouse & children moving away, trust over earnings, missing family members, positive and negative aspects).

3) Is the care of the young and elderly affected by migration? If so, in what way?

(Probe on: who does responsibility lie with? how necessary tasks are distributed, what levels of burden exist).

4) What gender dimensions arise due to migration?

(Probe on: pressure to go abroad particularly for males, negative perception of female migrants, others?)

5) Are social relations affected by migration? If so, in what way?

(Probe on: trust over earnings, societal trust (rumours, suspicion and jealousy), discrimination (caste, religion, status, gender, generational))

6) Is there any effect on culture from changing social relations as a result of migration?
Is so, what?

(Probe on: gender aspects; challenges to cultural norms – e.g. gender roles, caste, region, generational conflict).

Gender issues

1) Are gender roles reversed while a male or female member of the family is away? If so, to what effect and how does that alter when they return?

(Probe on: added burden on women, care of children/elderly, empowerment of women – decision-making (schooling, hiring/selling land/property/labour, political engagement, employment) tension/conflict related to this upon return).



- 2) Are men and male youth pressured by family and the community to go abroad for work as a function of gender roles? If so, what effect does this have?
(**Probe on:** impact on women who are obstructed from migrating, impact on men who experience this pressure, impact of this pressure when migrant returns).
- 3) How is the social status of women migrants affected by their migration?
(**Probe on:** rumours of infidelity, different acceptability of male and female migrants).
- 4) What security issues may exist as a result of migration? How are they managed?
(**Probe on:** Security issues associated with not having a man in the household, need to hire daily labour – security issues, security risks a female/male migrant experience abroad and how this may impact upon return, support mechanisms available such as for GBV).

Trust in and Engagement with the State

- 1) What State support mechanisms are there for migrants while abroad?
(**Probe on:** ability of the State to protect and support migrants while abroad, the impact this ability has on the level of trust migrants have for the State, social implications upon return of failure to support).
- 2) How do you feel about the interaction between the State and manpower companies?
(**Probe on:** regulatory issues, fairness of manpower company actions, impact that interaction has on levels of trust for the State).
- 3) How has the level of State service provision impacted on the choice to migrate? How has this affected your feelings towards the State?
(**Probe on:** reasons for migration - employment creation, education, access to financing, the failure of the State to provide these things).
- 4) What service provision has the State provided for the remaining family of migrants?
(**Probe on:** access to various local government functions (e.g. birth registration, marriage registration, citizenship certificate, land ownership); involvement in planning processes (VDC/DDC development plans); problem-solving functions (access to political parties, VDC, DDC, police etc. who?).
- 5) What level of access to information do migrants and migrant families have on various State issues? How do they use this information?
(**Probe on:** issues such as federalism, elections, constitution drafting process, what contribution migrants make based on information received etc.).

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